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# GROUND

## THE HYGIENE ISSUE

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**YOUR AD COULD BE HERE**

# EDITORIAL

Berlin, February 1st 2016

We are at the final curve of the winter, together with that curve we bring the second issue of the first volume of this compendium. Summarising the relative success our first issue accomplished, measured through the amount of feedbacks as well as the overwhelming quantity of applications sent to our short open call (the issue was research-based entirely, therefore the call for work was a gesture to make the content selection a bit more democratic). We apologise for those applications that were not selected and had no subsequent notification.

However, the issue you are about to navigate in is titled *The Hygiene Issue*. Remembering back in 2009 when this platform was in context with the counter-cultural and non-conformist punk scene, we came to realise now our taste for provocation didn't changed that much, maybe we did find a more *dip-lomatic* language, yet our intentions remained closely similar. We admit we like to shake the dust a bit. Therefore, departing from the concept of *hygiene*, furthermore, implementing visual support such as one of the copies from the seventeen Hottentot heads for Race Anatomy studies at the University of Stuttgart, it was matter of seconds to have public attention and opinions addressing our platform. Although for a few, the choice seemed a bit unethical, I personally considered that it is not. As editor and curator for this humble, at times ambitions publication, I want to give room to topics rigid constraints of scholarly and ac-

ademic environments might consider are too risky to touch. For instance; it was stated against my decision to use the copy of the Hottentot heads; - *you could have make it look less about race*.

It is not that I want to claim the pioneering positions, but that I'll like to remark that the perspective for this compendium's approach aims at exemplifying the local geography while avoiding commodification, i.e, that we are not putting out a contemporary magazine for exotic others and beautiful imageries, we are not making assumptions in order to define the inside from outside, nor is our intention to join the romantic waves race and gender debates are celebrating lately. Instead, this compendium is compiling stares of the same focus from within to display them in a multiplex. For our second issue I selected hygiene as a keyword, not solely as a provocative term, but as a triggering concept. At least for me, whenever I read *hygiene* I get triggered. That being said, this issue triggered a condense amount of contributors who explained us in their own way, (most were of course invited) how to think of *hygiene* triggers in them. I hope these inputs also trigger you.

I will now pull a Pontius Pilatus to let you navigate our volume on your own.



Editor in Chief



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# **SHE HOLDS OUT HER HAND**

Sophie le Roux









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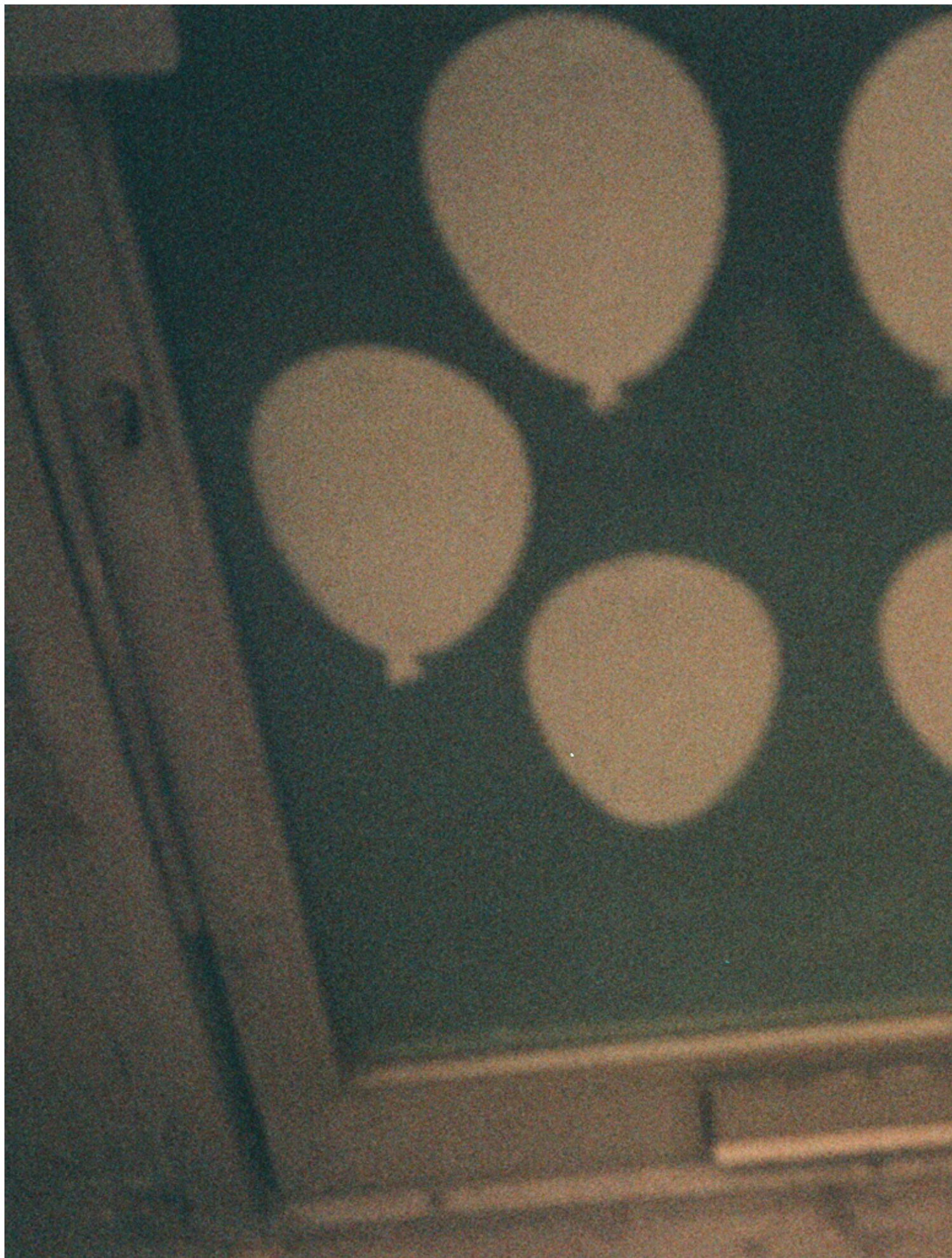
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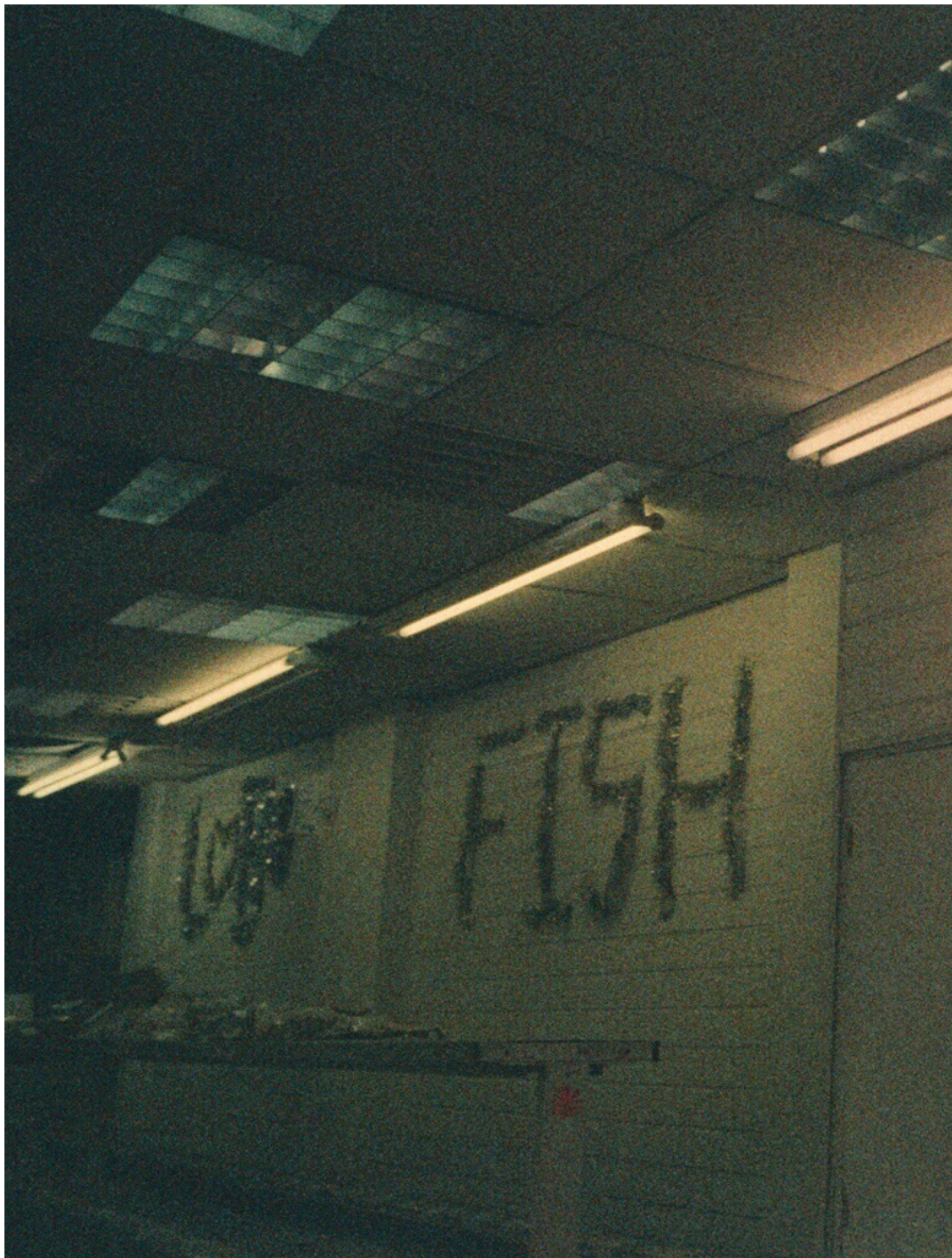


























# Paris nous embaumait de son air pesant et glacial

Le vent hivernal, fort impétueux, cinglait Saint-Denis mais ne réussissait pas à empêcher les immigrés de désertir leurs maisons et se jeter dans les dédales de la ville pour trouver de quoi nourrir leurs nombreuses familles. Les femmes s'attroupaient dans les salons de coiffure ou à Château-rouge, y préparaient des décoctions toxiques en tout genre pour rendre leurs cheveux plus souples, leurs peaux plus claires. Elles blablataient, se trémoussaient au rythme de la Rumba ou de Ya Mado, se racontaient les innombrables infidélités de leurs maris ou s'indignaient des performances très peu satisfaisantes de leur progéniture. La télévision nous infligeait un énième débat sur l'immigration ou le racisme, et quelques petits africains en mal de visibilité se plaisaient à s'y pavaner.

Moi, j'étais dans ma chambre, assis à mon bureau, heureux, l'âme envahie par l'enthousiasme, l'esprit essoufflé par ma nuit de travail acharné. Je venais de boucler le premier article mon blog « *Beaux noirs* ». Soudain, les mots de ma grande sœur Kimia, la veille commencèrent à déambuler dans ma tête en pas saccadés: « *Motema, je te dis, ne publie pas ton article sans l'avoir fait lire au préalable par un ami, pour être sûr qu'il est exempt de fautes et d'incohérences.* » J'éteins mon ordinateur et m'allongeai sur mon lit. Je m'allongeai sur mon lit, à plat ventre, mais n'arrivais pas à dormir. Ce n'est point la joie de pouvoir publier mon arti-

cle qui séquestrait mon sommeil, encore moins l'appréhension des impressions des lecteurs ou les mots intelligents de Kimia. Mon insomnie prend source dans ma plus profonde enfance...

Je suis né au milieu des ave maria mélancoliques de ma mère et des gronderies intempestives de mon père. J'ai grandi à Kinshasa. Kinshasa la belle. Kinshasa, échantillon de cette petite Afrique centrale animée par sa démence musicale et arrosée par les effluves éblouissantes du Mbisi yako tumba. Kinshasa et sa chaleur. Mulungé! Kinshasa et sa terre.

Mabelé ! Cette terre qui vous prend dans ses bras telle une mère, vous porte en son sein, vous berce, pourvoie à tous vos besoins vitaux, existentiels, et plus jamais ne vous lâche. Je m'en souviens encore. J'ai passé mon enfance dans une petite villa abimée du Sud de Kinshasa. Une villa abimée mais belle. Belle comme la lueur insoucieuse miroitant dans les premiers regards d'un nouveau-né. Précaire. Précaire comme l'éclat d'une rose attendant l'hiver. Précaire mais pratique. Pratique comme la filiation du temps : heures, minutes, secondes. Abimée, belle, précaire, pratique. Respirant l'amour et le calme distillés par ma mère. Ah ma mère! Ma mère, la pieuse. Il m'arrive encore aujourd'hui de me souvenir de nos prières matinales autour de la table basse du salon. Kimia entonnait un chant d'allégresse en lingala, puis nous chantions ensemble avant de laisser la place à maman



qui confiait notre journée au Seigneur: « *Tata nzambe pambola biso, sunga biso.* » Elle poursuivait en chassant tout démon qui s'évertuerait à s'attaquer à la sérénité d'un membre de la famille. Le foulard noué aux hanches, le souffle floué et les veines gonflées au point d'exploser, elle criait de plus belle, à telle enseigne qu'on avait l'impression que sa voix allait emporter notre plafond déjà en état de vétusté avancé. Encore plus impétueuse, elle menaçait ces fameux démons qu'on ne voyait démons jamais, n'entendait jamais mais qui selon ma mère étaient la cause directe de l'alcoolisme de papa, les responsables idoines de son récidiviste mal de dos —et pourtant elle était une cultivatrice—l'invétére coupable de mes mauvaises notes en mathématiques. C'est pourquoi elle ne leur faisait pas de cadeaux. Riche de sa foi vieille d'au moins trente ans, elle leur envoyait la foudre au nom de Jésus, le tonnerre pour éteindre leur souffle, elle jetait sur eux un feu ardent pour les brûler et les faire périr à jamais, encore au nom de Jésus. Enfin elle leur donnait rendez-vous le jour du jugement dernier. Toujours au nom de Jésus, nous clôturions la prière en chantant avant de nous mettre sur le chemin de l'école. Nous fréquentions tous le même lycée, mes sœurs et moi mais nous n'y allions pas ensemble. Toute affublée d'exaltation, Kimia s'empressait de retrouver le Lycée de la Gaïeté, radotant à qui veut l'entendre qu'elle est en Terminale et s'apprête à voler pour la France, pour y poursuivre ses études. Elle était suivie par ma petite sœur Ndaya, élève de troisième, bavarde comme une pie, croyant encore en l'existence du Père Noël et traversant avec témérité la phase de puberté, le genre de fille qui les soirs, interprète des chansons

de Beyonce devant le miroir du salon, mais une fille aussi belle et imprévisible qu'un orgasme féminin, une petite boule d'énergie rêveuse, la préférée de papa. Moi, j'arrivais toujours en retard au lycée. Il m'arrivait même de manquer les cours. Parce que je n'aimais pas les mathématiques. J'exécrais la voix détonante du professeur de mathématiques qui s'amusaient à me ridiculiser en m'imposant de résoudre des équations aux mille inconnues devant toute la classe. Parce que je vomissais l'orgueil de mon père lorsqu'il m'intimait : « *tu dois t'améliorer en maths, tu dois devenir un grand ingénieur ou un médecin reconnu.* »

Je détestais le jour de remise des copies de maths, craignant l'habituelle bastonnade réservée à ceux qui avaient de mauvaises notes. Moi ce que j'aimais c'était la prose d'Henri Lopez, l'originalité et l'engagement des textes d'Aimé-Césaire. À cette époque, mon père ne le savait pas encore...

A cette époque, mon père ne savait pas encore qu'il m'avait détruit dans ma chair et dans ma propre estime.

Je ne le voyais que les week-ends ou les vendredis soirs, lorsqu'il rentrait ivre, déséquilibrait l'atmosphère paisible de la maison, faisant trembler les murs de la maison de sa voix forte de quinquagénaire en bonne santé physique. Nous ne l'entendions que lorsqu'il nous interdisait de regarder la télévision ou nous intimait de réviser nos leçons. Maman m'avait raconté qu'à ma naissance, il s'était tant réjoui d'avoir un garçon. Mais jamais de ma courte vie, je n'avais noté un témoignage, fût-il futile, de cet amour. Je passais le début de ma jeunesse à l'esquiver, à respirer à sa vision, à vivre à sa volonté, à pleurer sous les poids des coups



qu'il m'infligeait, à marcher tête baissée, blessé par les mots tranchants sur moi par lui dardés. Il n'avait de cesse de me rappeler que je n'étais qu'un bon à rien, un nullard devant l'Eternel. « *Tu n'es qu'un imbécile, un cancre, Motema, zoba, nia-ma* » qu'il me dit un matin en pleine rue alors que j'avais mal rangé des meubles dans notre camion de déménagement.

« *Bon sang. Qu'il est bête ce garçon!* »

Il criait. Tu ressembles même à qui? Pas à moi dans tous les cas. Les regards fixateurs et tristes de maman n'y firent rien. Les larmes discrètes de mes sœurs non plus. Devant une horde de femmes en pagne qui rentraient des champs. Devant les yeux des jeunes de mon âge qui baissaient leurs têtes pour pouffer de rire. J'avais tant entendu ce mot cancre qu'il m'arrivait de croire que c'était mon prénom. Mon père m'appelait cancre, moi, sang de son sang, chair de sa chair Cancre et il souhaitait que je devienne un grand ingénieur ou un médecin reconnu. Cancre, mais je décrochai mon baccalauréat scientifique. Cancre mais il m'inscrivit à l'université des sciences appliquées de Paris.

A cette époque je ne savais rien de « la *négritude* » et de « l'*africanité*. »

Contrairement à Kimia arrivée un an plus tôt, je n'avais pas rêvé la France. Simple-ment je me démenais à suivre le dessein tracé par papa.

Pendant deux ans, je perdis ma vie à somnoler dans l'Amphi-Informatique. Deux ans à m'infliger des programmes informatiques insondables. Deux ans à fuir mon miroir, apeuré par mon propre reflet, torturé par la honte d'exister, de n'être qu'un cancre. Deux ans à me demander combien de temps encore, j'allais vivre la vie de mon père, celle dont

il avait toujours rêvé pour renaitre, pour s'affirmer. Deux ans à répondre : « *sango malam mama, ça va* » lorsque maman me prenait des nouvelles de moi au téléphone, et pourtant j'étais proche du suicide. Deux ans à m'exclamer « *amen, amen* » lorsque papa m'encourageait: « *travaille dur, Motema, bientôt tu seras un grand ingénieur en informatique* »

Deux ans à mentir...

Et un jour, l'amour en décida autrement. Un jour d'été, la vérité jaillit de l'amour. Un midi ensoleillé, assis sur un banc de la place Châtelet-les halles, m'empiffrant des sonorités percutantes de Fela Kuti, les yeux rougis par mes excès de café et de Red Bull, un ange vint se poser près de moi. Un ange aux bulles étoilées à la place des yeux. Un ange à la peau couleur miel, comme ma mère. Un ange tenant entre les mains Cahier d'un retour au pays natal d'Aimé-Césaire. Un ange prénommé Andela. Une fille fabuleuse. De l'amour surgit la vérité.

– *Water no get enemy est vraiment la plus belle chanson de Fela, qu'elle me dit.*

Je feins de n'avoir rien entendu. Elle tous-sota. Certainement pour capturer mon attention. La fille reprit:

– *Ma mère aimait beaucoup Fela, elle connaissait toutes ses chansons par cœur.*

C'est une camerounaise, me dis-je intérieurement. Ah les camerounaises et leur beauté foudroyante. Les camerounaises et leur accent prétentieux.

– *J'ai fini de relire Cahier d'un retour au pays natal hier soir pour la quatrième fois, me vantai-je.*



Eclats de rire! Tournoiement de passions!  
Enchevêtrements de confidences!

S'ensuivirent des long discours interminables sur nos enfances. Nous nous racontions nos vies alors que nous nous ne connaissions pas.

« *Fais ce que ton cœur t'intime de faire, me glissait Andela à l'oreille en m'embrasant avant de s'en aller vers vingt-trois heures.* » Je ne dormis pas cette nuit. Je pensai à moi. Je pensai à Andela. Je pensai à Andela et moi. Je l'aimais. Déjà.

Grâce à elle, j'arrêtai mes études en informatique pour m'inscrire en littérature africaine à la Sorbonne. Grâce à elle, j'eus le courage de l'annoncer à mon père. Il ne me parlait plus. Maman non plus. J'étais de nouveau un cancre. Grâce à elle, je trouvai un stage dans un collège de la place parisienne. Ce collège regorgeait une kyrielle d'enfants d'immigrés africains en quête d'identité. Je les voyais timides, mal dans leurs peaux, leurs subconscients leur rappelant en permanence qu'ils ne sont pas intelligents, pas assez beaux, inférieurs aux « *blancs*. »

Je revoyais ma propre timidité, mon manque de confiance en moi en ces enfants. Je les écoutais, les contemplais avec fascination. L'un d'entre eux me dit un jour en larmes : « *je suis un con, cancre.* » Cancre! Encore. C'est pour ces petits jeunes que j'ai décidé de créer mon blog « *Beaux noirs* ».

C'est pour leur dire qu'ils sont beaux, pour me soigner de mon propre mal-être que je titrai mon premier article: « *Les « noirs » sont beaux et intelligents.* » Ainsi débutait mon article: ADVERTISEMENT.

Nos ancêtres ont bravé l'esclavage, ont souffert de la colonisation.

Lentement on a semé en eux la honte d'être « *noir* ». Lentement on leur a con-

vaincu qu'ils ne sont pas assez beaux, pas assez intelligents. Je crois que cette honte, ce dégoût de soi-même, ce sentiment d'infériorité sont restés indélébilement fixés à nos mémoires et transmis de générations en générations. A force de croupir sous les coups de fouets du maître, l'esclave a fini par croire que la beauté et l'intelligence étaient des denrées trop prestigieuses auxquelles il était totalement irréaliste d'aspirer. Les pleurs ont fini par laisser place à la haine. La haine de soi.

Mais aujourd'hui, seulement aujourd'hui, je prends conscience qu'il y a en moi des mémoires, des ondes absurdes qui m'empêchent de m'aimer tel que je suis, tel que j'ai été créé. Je me pardonne. Je décide de m'aimer tel que je suis, « *tel que j'ai été créé.* »

Je pense que je ne parvenais pas à publier mon article ou à le proposer à la relecture d'un ami à cause de mon père. Oui! A cause de ce qu'il s'est évertué à faire de moi depuis le jour où je suis entré dans ce monde: un garçon déséquilibré, révolté, timide, laid. Je crois qu'il détenait les clés de mon estime de moi. Je crois que lui seul pouvait m'aider à me dire que je m'aime, à me convaincre que Motema n'est pas un synonyme de cancre.

Je ne lui en veux pas. Je n'en veux pas aux « *noirs* ». Ce n'est pas leur faute.

J'appelai mon père :

–Papa, je m'aime. Papa je t'aime.

–Nga pe na linga kayo, Motema.

Il fondit en larmes...



# NAUSEA

Nicola Kuperus





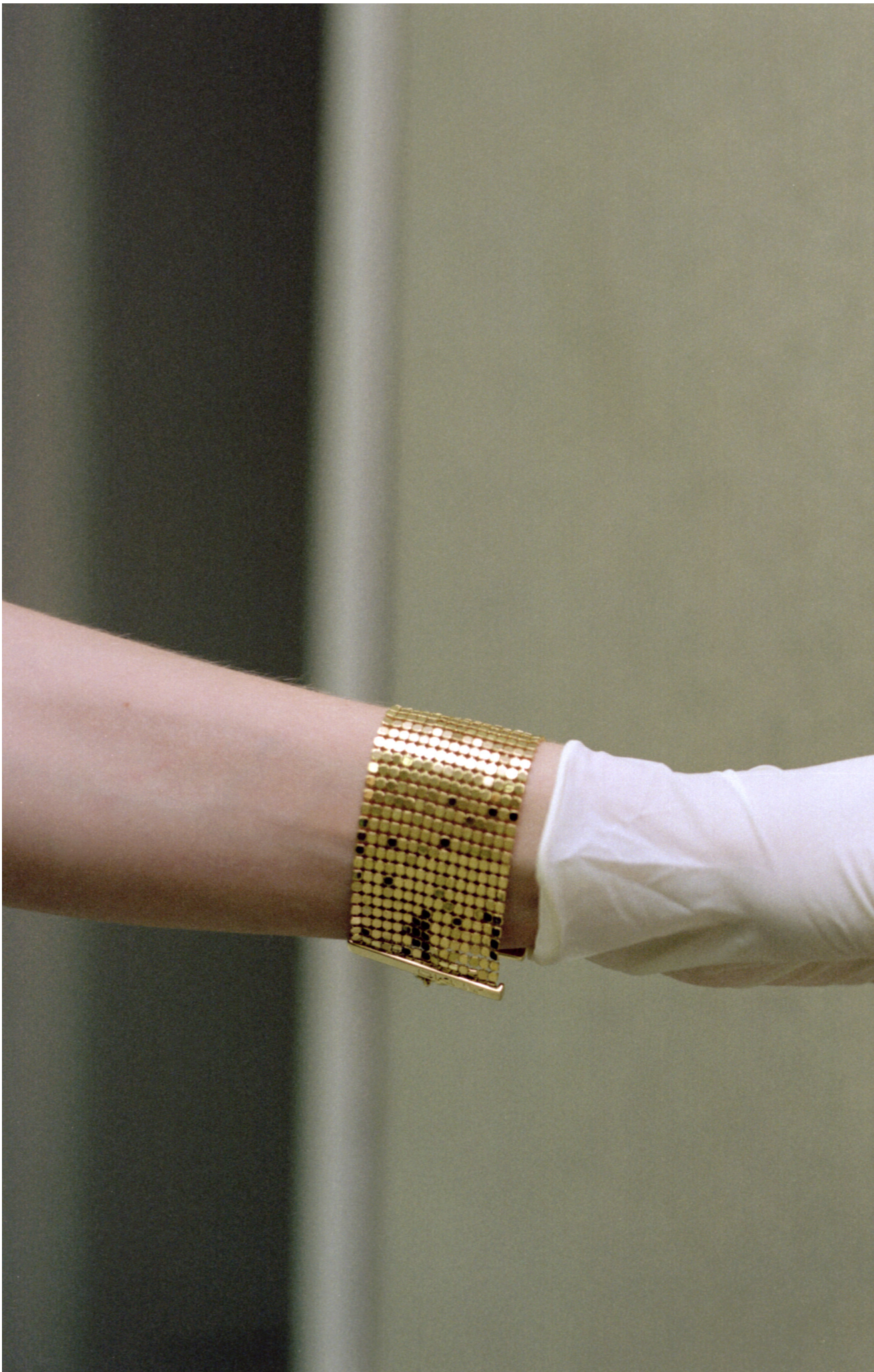


















# MYTHEN

Francesco Cascavilla

























Pyotr Pavlensky

# SEPARAT

























**EMRE  
BUSSE**



**Ismael Ogando.** Emre, could you tell us How you ended up in Berlin?

**Emre Busse.** I finished my degree in Communication Design, Cinema and Sociology. I then decided to study my masters at The Bauhaus University in Weimar whilst living in Berlin. During this time I met Chris Phillips and began to work with Pornceptual as a filmmaker and head curator. After that I started to produce my collaborative long length film works such as “Hyper Masculinity On The Dance Floor” and “Landlords” having come from a documentary background.

**IO.** As part of the "young and sexy" scene of Berlin, how have you found the space for developing your ideas?

**EB.** I don't believe in age hierarchy or mainstream beauty norms. They all started with my personal experiences.

**IO.** You are also involved with the production and development of Pornceptual as a blog and a Party, which would you say are the intention for creating such a space for sexualities?

**EB.** Pornceptual is trying to create something new in queer narrative. We are a young project and so we are still learning a lot from our own experiences. Our intention is trying to create a safe artistic space for any kind of perversion that contains mutual consent. In the contemporary Berlin party scene most of the bigger events have a sell by date and I think that it is important to have a strong methodology before it gets commercialised. Once the party gets commercialised you start to lose your identity but at that point you start to make money and this is where the problem starts. The queer party scene still highlights gender issues as one of the biggest problems but I think we should focus more on aspects of economy. We all need guest list right?

**IO.** Well, there is Gayhane, Homopathik, and so, but I perceived a whole different vibe from Pornceptual, who else is involve in this idea, are you more of a eclectic group sharing affinities or more a homogenic crew pushing towards a goal?



**EB.** We are four people, Chris Phillips is the founder of the project, Raquel Fedato is the organisation manager and Eric Phillips is taking care of the Pornceptual Magazine since we already have two issues and it's also better to have some publications. We are always open for collaborations and we work within a collective conscious.

**IO.** As a public figure, how do you cut clean self-perception from general expectations?

**EB.** What, like Beyoncé?

**IO.** You are collaborating in a new project, a film titled "Landlords", how did it come up as a project?

**EB.** The concept started with my personal experience with these spaces and an ongoing interest in what was behind them. I see myself as a part of the Berlin fetish scene. There are clear boundaries between the Schöneberg and Neukölln/Kreuzberg sex positive scenes. The Kreuzberg/ Neukölln scenes often deal with about economical problems, gentrification issues and ecological changes. In the Schöneberg scene the problems fall under pink washed gay politics, I find both important. I wish to connect these two districts with my work.

**IO.** The film is finished and there has been quite a buzz about it since its teaser came out. do you personally expect the film to teach anything in particular?

I'm not that interested in teaching anyone anything but more to create a space that inspires and allows people to reclaim their surroundings through the work. Coming from a Marxist (theory) background I would really like to stress that I believe that there is "good" capitalism and I think that we should focus more on this side of queer politics in order to rewrite history.

**IO.** Apart from the premiere at the Schwules Museum - Berlin, where can the documentary be seen?

**EB.** The film will soon be in festivals around the world. Personally, I believe that in the time of social media we don't need to work for lobbies and appreciation of some kind of authorities to share our works.

**IO.** Is there any other project you might have been structuring?

**EB.** I am planning to make a mockumentary about the history of fisting but the idea is still being developed. I want to work with people from different disciplines throughout the project but I will be directing the film alone. My aim behind making this movie is in rewriting recent history with a queer narrative. I will need a bit of time before starting this project because I deserve a holiday.







# **ANTI-PORN**

**Eric & Chris Phillips**













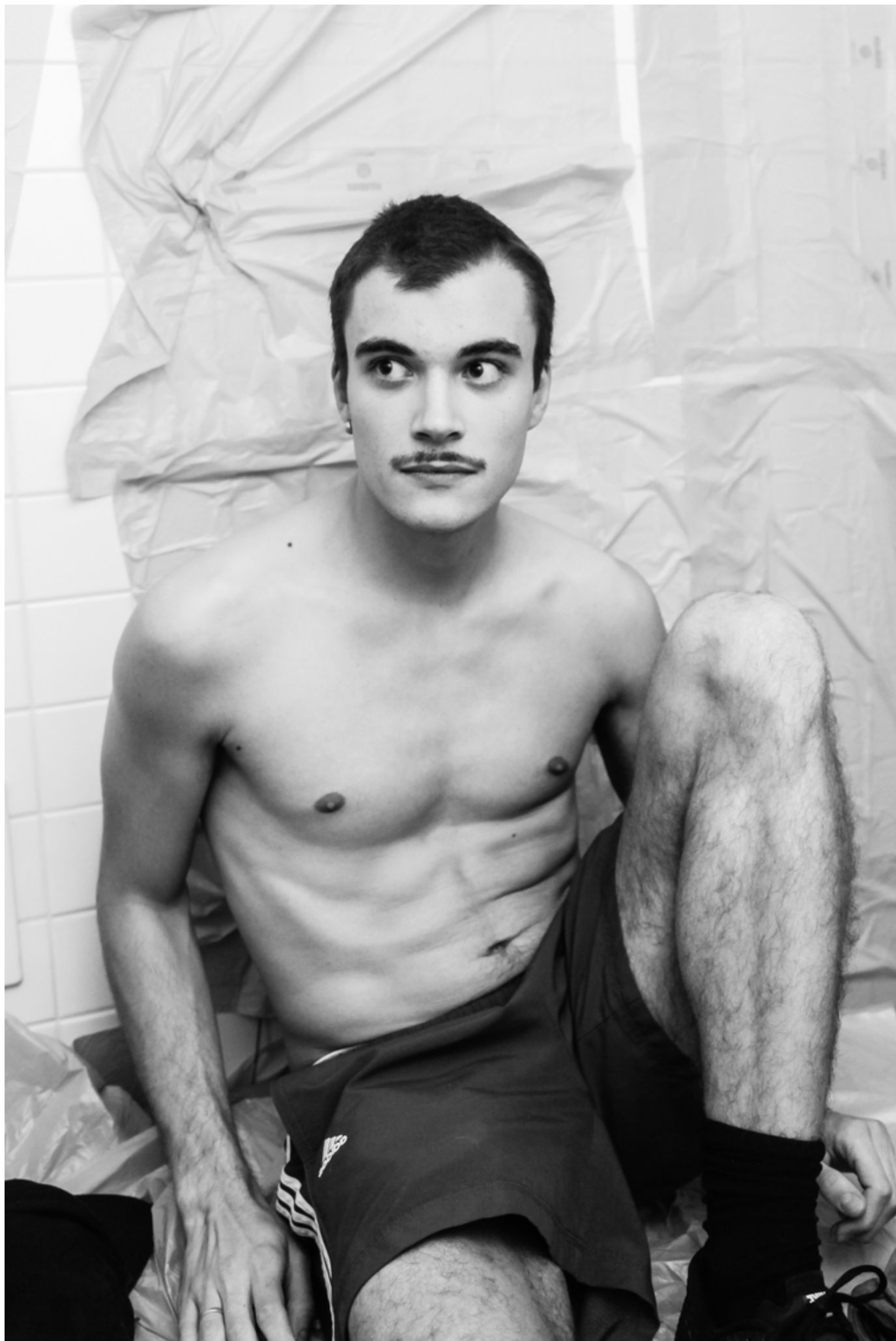




































# WÄSCHE WEIß

Søren Drastrup





















# **LIMPIEZA REALNESS**

Maximo del Castillo





















# **HYE KYOUNG KWON**





**Yeri Hong.** “Container” 시리즈를 봤을 때 처음에는 길에서 흔히 볼 수 있는 대상으로 작업하신다는 생각이 들었습니다. 두꺼비집이나 쓰레기통, 모래함 등을 그리시는 이유가 무엇인가요?

**Hye Kyung Kwon.** 제가 베를린에 살면서 느낀 점은 어디를 가든지 도시를 재 정비하는 공사현장이 많다는 것입니다. 그로 인해 자연스럽게 컨테이너라는 소재를 접하게 되었습니다. 이런 일상에서 흔히 볼 수 있는 하찮은 (혹은 하찮게 보이는) 사물들을 통해서 우리가 당연하게 생각하고 받아들이고 있는 지각과 인식에 대해 생각해 보고 그리고 가치에 대해 생각해 보고자 이러한 사물들을 선택하게 되었습니다.

**YH.** 처음 이 작업을 시작하게 된 계기가 무엇인가요?

**HKW.** 처음 작업을 시작하게 된 계기는 긴 시간 외국인으로 독일에서 살며 받아온 소외감과 고독함에서 출발 되었습니다. 8년 동안 독일에서 살며 항상 현지인들과 나와의 관계에 보이지 않는 벽을 느꼈고 이로부터 오는 오해들로 결국 분리됨을 느꼈습니다. 그 결과 저의 관심사는 사람에서 사물로 변화하게 되었습니다. 일상에서 자주 보지만 가치가 없어 주목받지 못하는 사물들을 관찰하면서 무엇이 우리삶에 정말 중요한가 혹은 중요하지 않은것있가에 생각해 보게 되었고 현대 사회에서 말하는 가치의 기준에 대해 생각하고자 이 작업을 시작하게 되었습니다.

**YH.** 길에서 흔히 볼 수 있는 컨테이너에서 어떤 영감을 받으시는지, 어떤 감정을 느끼시는지 궁금합니다.

**Yeri Hong.** When I see your series “Container”, I think it’s very vanal element of the streets of Berlin, why do you portrait such a kind of object?

**Hye Kyung Kwon.** At the point while living in Berlin I felt that there were too many construction sites for the re-development of the city. As a result, through the observation I came across the object naturally called “container”. Objects, which at first seem to be timid or worthless, I considered conceptions about being taken for granted and thought far ahead the object value in the routine. So I choose those objects from streets to re-contextualise it value.

**YH.** What is the primal motton behind these series?

**HKW.** My personal motivation for these works started from the sense of alienation and loneliness I experienced as a foreigner in Germany. I’ve always felt the invisible walls between me and the natives for eight years, and it has led me to create a sense of deattachment by misunderstanding each other. As a result, my interest and focus shifted from humans to objects. Observing the objects which germans see as common and normal therefore worthless, I thought what is important and not in out life and what is the standard for *worth* in western societies.

**HKW.** 베를린의 거리에서 발견되는 컨테이너들은 꽤 큰 편이지만 사람들은 그것을 전혀 의식하지 않습니다. 거의 존재감이 없지요. 또한 컨테이너는 이동성이라는 특성이 있는데 예전에 베를린 Friedrichstrasse 에서 보았던 컨테이너를 얼마후 Glogauer str.에서 발견한 적이 있었습니다. 저는 그런 컨테이너의 무 존재감과 그리고 이곳저곳을 돌아다니는 이동성이라는 부분을 통해 독일에서 이방인으로 살아가는 저의 모습을 느꼈습니다. 이런 점들이 컨테이너를 소재로 작업을 할 때 표현적인 부분에 많은 영향을 줍니다.

**YH.** 컨테이너 시리즈를 작업하실 때, 과정이 궁금합니다.

**HKW.** 처음에는 베를린의 거리를 이곳저곳 다니며 거리에서 흥미로운 컨테이너를 사진으로 수집합니다. 이것은 그림의 밑 작업으로 사용됩니다. 작업의 재료와 크기 또한 작업에서 중요한 요소인데 페인트, 스프레이 등 실재 모티브와 같은 공업용 재료를 써서 질감적인 부분에도 동일감을 주려고 하였습니다. 그리고 라이프사이즈로 제작된 2, 3m가 넘는 캔버스 작업은 현장감과 공간감을 주는 중요한 역할을 합니다.

**YH.** 그리고 작업을 통해서 표현하고 싶은 것이나 하시는 이유가 궁금합니다.

**HKW.** 제 작업을 통해서 일상 속에서 너무 익숙하여 당연하게 받아들이던 것들과 평범하고 가치 없어 보이는 것에 대해 다양한 시각과 가능성으로 보도록 제시하고자 하였습니다.

**YH.** 어떤 컨테이너를 선택하셔서 작업하시나요? 기준이 있나요?

**YH.** What comes to your mind while observing the containers in streets? I am wondering whether you feel any emotion.

**HKW.** Most containers in Berlin are quite huge yet people don't become totally aware of their existence. Also, the containers have one characteristic in common, they are mobile. When I saw the same containers in Friedrichstrasse and Glogauerstraße where I had my studio, I thought the containers are like me. Like me because I felt myself as a stranger who is was rootless in Germany through mobility and without existence. Those emotional points influenced me to make my "Container" series.

**YH.** How do you develop the technical aspect of your work? I was wondering what is the process behind it.

**HKW.** At first, I've collected pictures of interesting containers I found in Berlin, then used them for my craft works. I normally use the same industrial materials you can relate to the containers, such as spray-paint and oil paint which sort of are associated to a similar identity. Also I choose canvas from 2 to 3 meters that emulates the feelings of space and vividness.

**YH.** What would you say you want to express through these works.

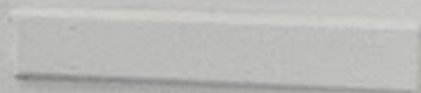


7-155



**Dressler**

Entsorgungsgesellschaft mbH  
Containerdienst . Abbruch . Erdbau





**HKW.** 기준이라면 직접 보고 발견한 컨테이너를 소재로 작업합니다.

**YH.** 컨테이너 시리즈에서 표현하시고자 하는 점이 어떤 것인지 궁금합니다.

**HKW.** 앞서 말한 것과 같이 컨테이너 시리즈를 통해서 우리가 일상에서 너무 익숙하게 보아서 당연하게 받아들이는 지각적인 부분과 인식에 대해서 생각해 보고자 하였습니다. 그리고 우리가 평소 생각하던 가치의 기준에 대해서 작업을 통해 다시 한 번 생각해 보고자 하였고 또 무엇이 우리에게 정말 중요한가 혹은 중요하지 않은 것 인가에 질문을 던지고자 했습니다.

**YH.** 작업환경이 한국이 아닌 베를린(독일)이라는 점이 혜경씨에게 어떤 영향을 미치는가요?

**HKW.** 사실 2008년에 독일에 왔기 때문에 지금은 한국보다 오히려 독일에서의 작업환경이 익숙한편입니다. 베를린으로 오기 전 Saarbruecken 이라는 프랑스의 국경에 있는 도시에서 살았는데 그곳의 분위기와 베를린의 분위기는 정말 달랐습니다. 그래서 처음 베를린으로 오자마자 했던 작업이 **Container B-1,2,3,4.** 시리즈 입니다. 그만큼 베를린은 제가 작업을 하는데 많은 영감을 주는 곳 인 것 같습니다.

**YH.** 혜경씨 작업 중에 지도와 연관된 작업을 보았는데, 이 작업들도 컨테이너 시리즈와 연관이 있나요?

**HKW.** 지도와 연관된 작업은 2011-2012 년에 제작되었던 “Flag Series” 작업의 연장선이라 보시면 됩니다. 여행을 통해 직접 다녔던 길들을 구글 맵을 통해 점을 찍어 표시하며 각각의 점들을 서로 연결하여 나만의 지도를 만드는 작업인데 두 작업 모두 직접 체험한 장소로부터 시작되는 것이기 때문에 연관이 있다고 할 수 있습니다.

**HKW.** I try to suggest a variety of perspectives and possibilities of seeing at objects that for being too ordinary and accustomed to our everyday life become worthless.

**YH.** Which containers do you choose? Do you have your own standard for select?

**HKW.** I simply choose containers which I encounter in direct.

**YH.** But I still wonder what is your aim with these series.

**HKW.** Well, as I said, I have questions. what is worth or not in our reality? what is important or not? I just want to consider of common things which we took for granted. through that object I choose, we can think again about that.

**YH.** Your work is informed by geographical situations, For instance, you make your art works in Berlin about elements found in Berlin and not in South Korea.

**HKW.** In fact, I've lived in Germany since 2008, so It's familiar to work in here rather than in Korea. But before living in Berlin, I was living in Saarbrücken which is located near to France. That location in one other side is quite different to Berlin. When I moved to Berlin, I started my series **Container B-1,2,3,4.** I would say that I am influenced by Berlin.

**YH.** I also saw your series “Maps”, do any of your previous series concern the “Container” series?

**YH.** 혜경씨에게 영감을 주는 다른 작가들이 있나요?

**HKW.** 2015년 여름에 베를린 Martin Gropius Bau 와 Haus der Berliner Festspiele 에서 전시했던 Tino Sehgal 의 전시를 다녀와 한동안 충격에 빠졌었습니다. 제가 하고있는 작업의 방향에 대해 많은 생각을 하도록 해주었습니다. 그리고 Katharina Grosse 작업도 좋아합니다.

**YH.** 앞으로의 작업 계획은 어떻게 되시나요?

**HKW.** 지금까지의 작업은 대부분 회화로만 작업해 왔었는데 앞으로 작업에는 회화라는 영역의 제한을 두지 않고 다양한 매체로 작업을 하고 싶습니다. 그리고 올해의 가장 큰 계획은 새로운 작업에 집중하는 것입니다.

**HKW.** The Work associated is called “Flag Series” continuation of the work that was produced in 2011-2012. I travelled through the streets making traces with check-ins that went directly to the Google Maps application and took your own map by interconnecting each point. I think that works is connected because I made this project two art pieces from the sites I experienced.

**YH.** Which artists inspire you, and how?

**HKW.** When I saw the exhibitions of Tino Sehgal at the Martin Gropius Bau and Haus der Berliner Fetspiele, I was really shocked. their art works made me think again and consider the direction of mine too. and I also love the works of Katharina Grosse.

**YH.** What is your next plan for art works?

**HKW.** I’ve been mostly painting but I want to wide my production by using a more diverse range of media. But the most important thing for me this year is to focus on a new series.












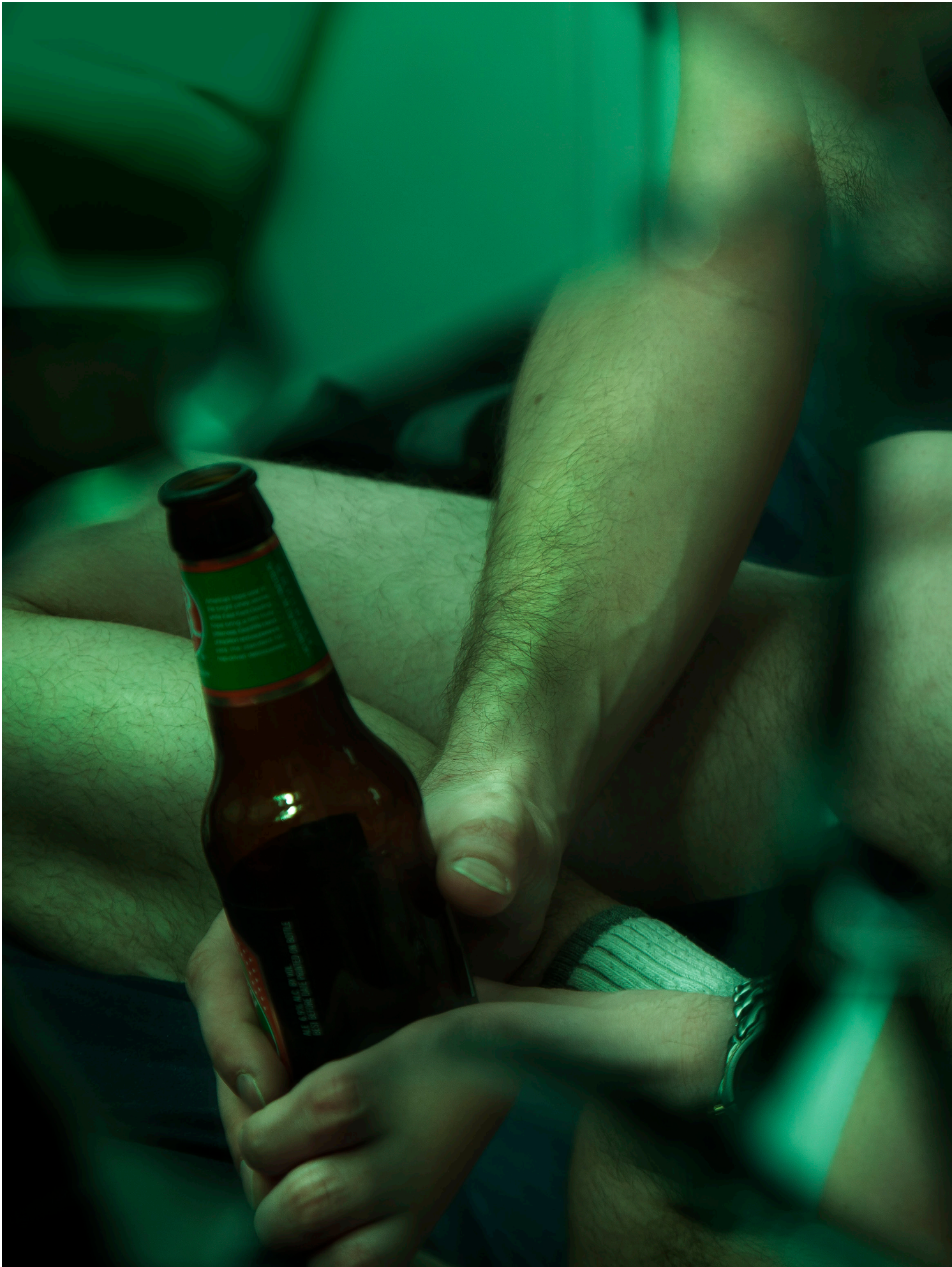




# RUB HAIR IN THE WOUND

Andy Egelhoff

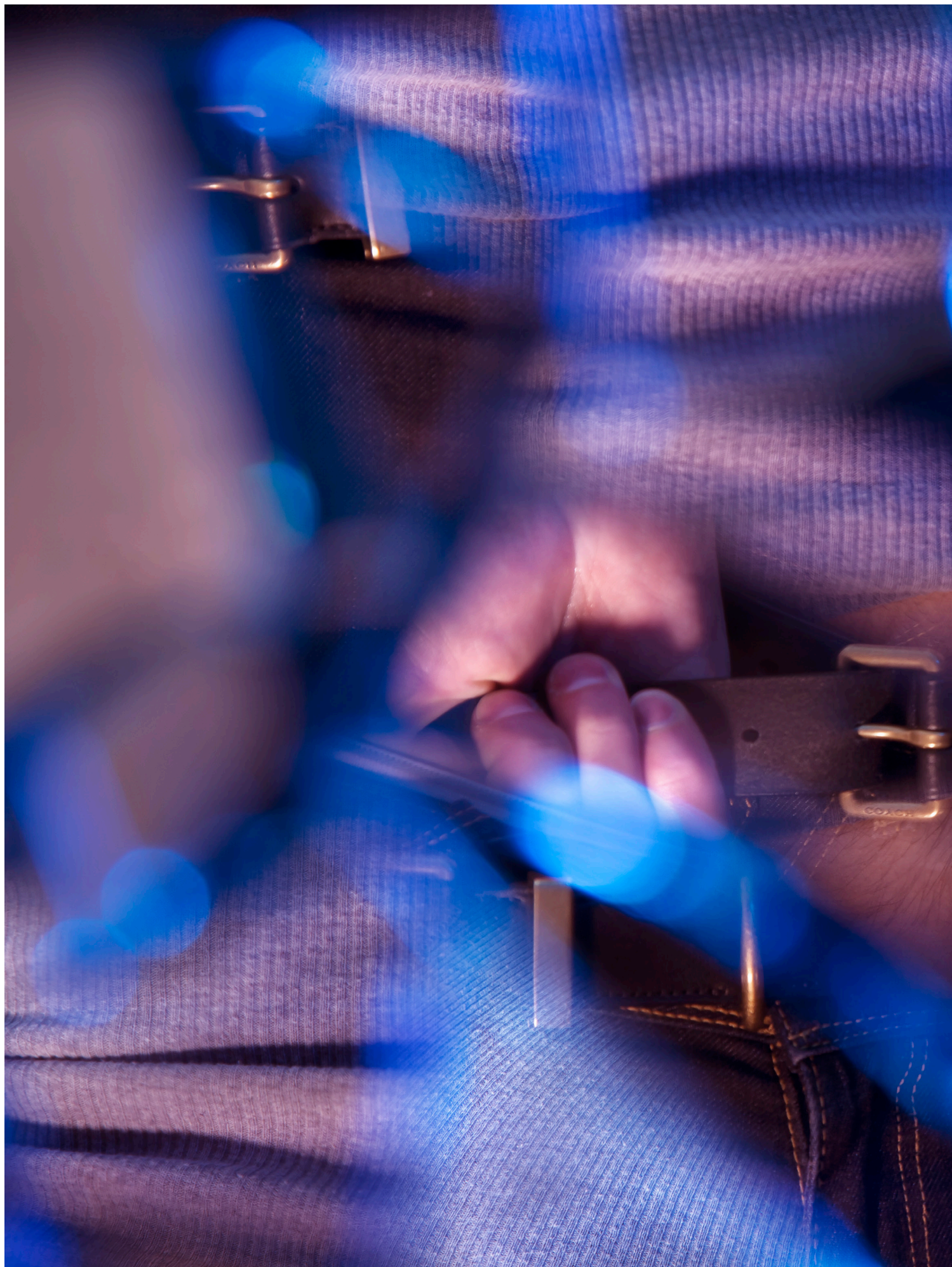




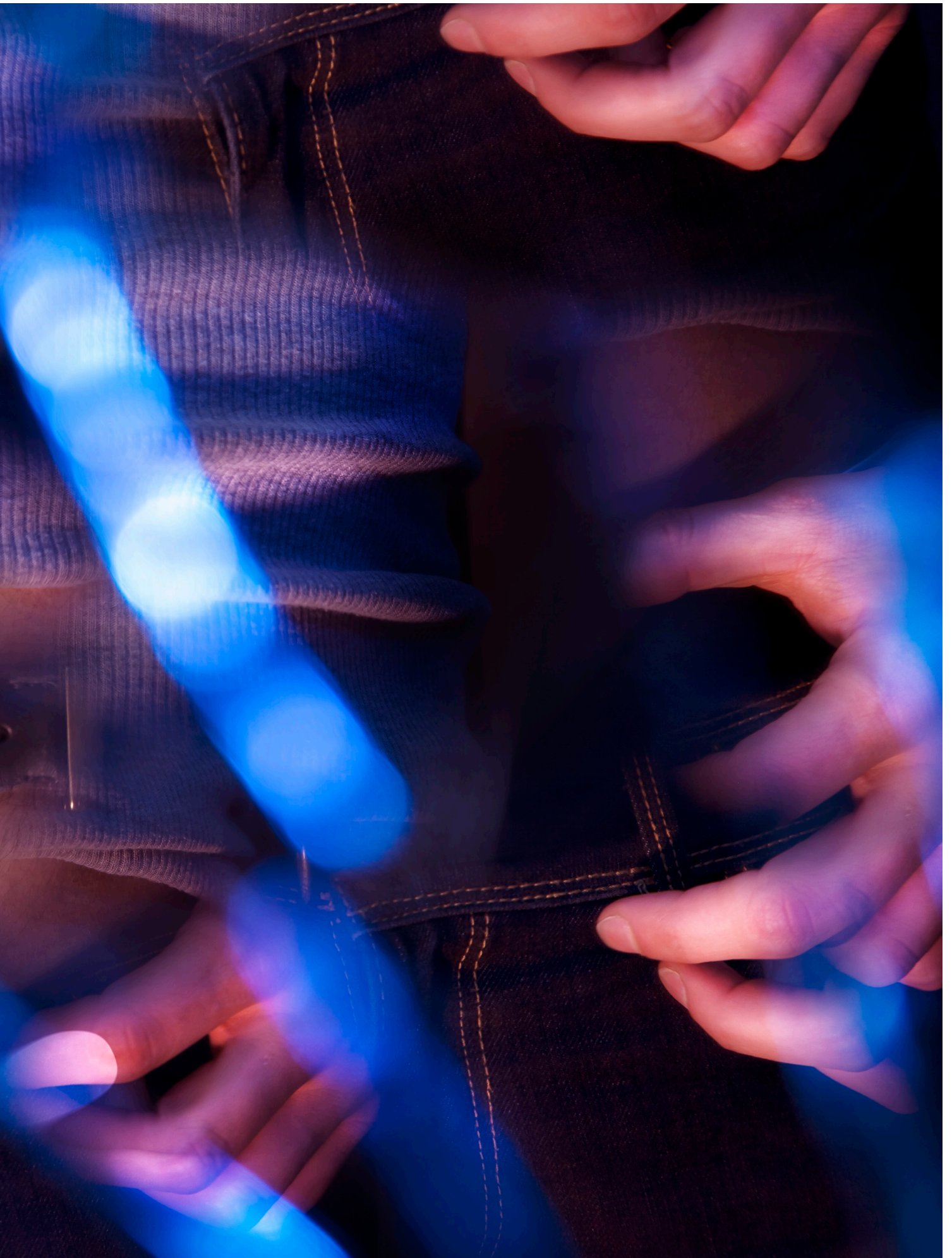




















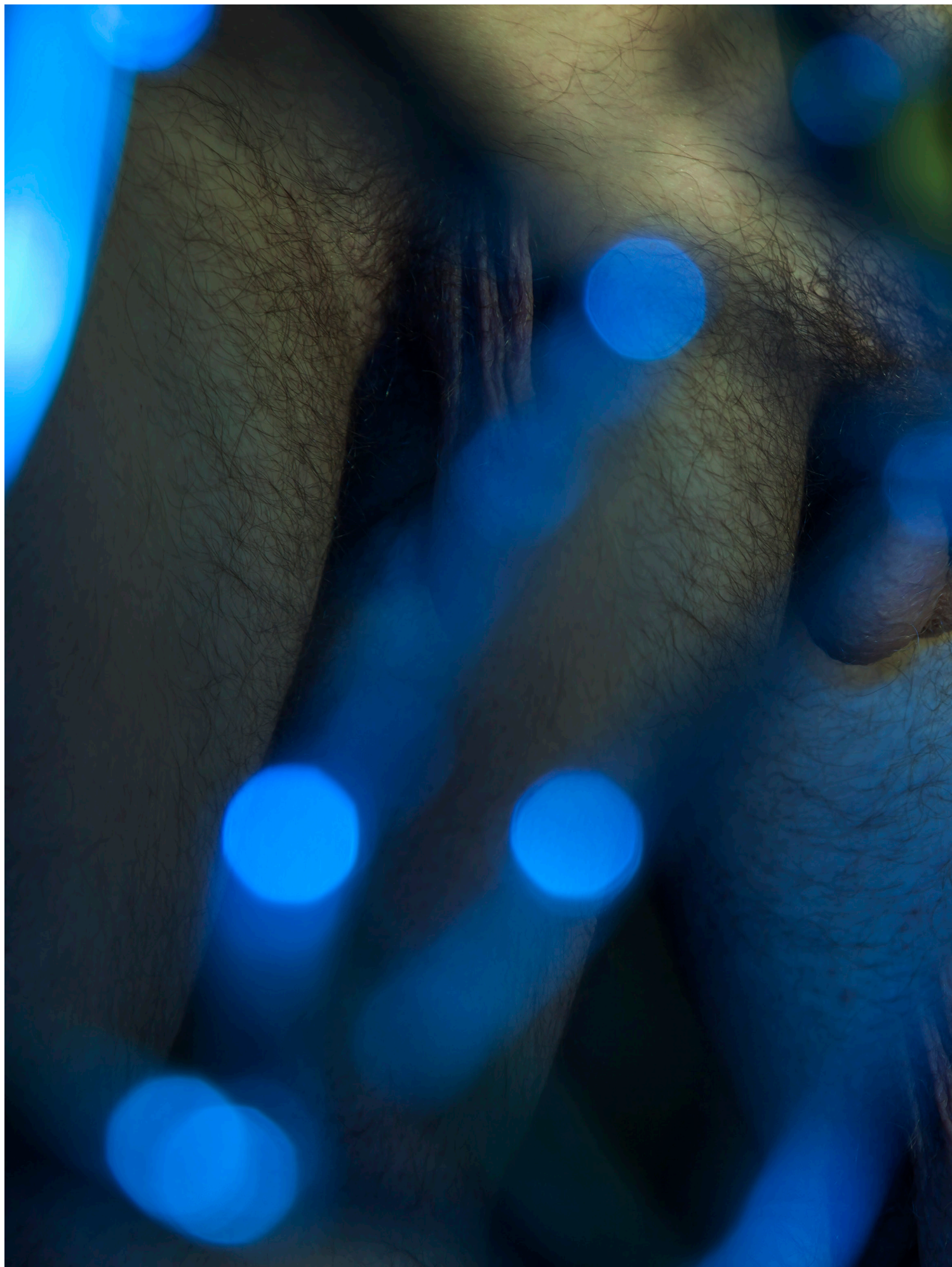










































# BROUGHT TO LIGHT

Jonathan Glendon









## **For the last ten years a jungle hospital has been operating on the isolated island of Taveuni in Northern Fiji**

Once a year a medical team from USA, New Zealand and Australia go to Taveuni to perform on average 300 free eye surgeries to the blind. Free food, transportation and accommodations are all offered to the patients that come from the 180 inhabited islands that make of Fiji. I was asked to travel to an outer island to photograph the trials a patient must face to get to the hospital

Dahn has experienced over 50 years of eye impairment. So long, that she has since forgotten how she damaged her eyes in the first place. She has three sons, one of which neglects her and sees her as a burden, another one lives in the city with his own family and the third son lives with her out in rural Lambasa. He works long hours at a sugar cane farm to support himself and his mother. Dahn is left alone to cook and clean the house in complete blindness.

Due to her isolation and lack of independence, she has been restricted to her property for the almost 18 years as the family cannot take her anywhere. I was without a fixer and and knew none of the local language or where I was supposed to meet Dahn. Thankfully I met up with an old contact and received help from a local journalist to help track her down and interpret the conversations.

We drove an hour out of Lambasa, where the road turned into ruts and the buildings become fewer and less frequent. When we found her property, we found her outside stumbling around hanging the washing. We explained who we were and she invited us inside where she had a pot of boiling water over a fire that she used for the tea. She groped around for the cups and shakily poured the hot tea into each mug. We offered to do it but she gave us a disapproving look and continued to pour. We sat down and talked but we were interrupted by her son who came home from work. He told me that it was last week where he put his foot down and demanded that his mother stop. However, she was given an offer to have her sight restored by

coming to the island of Taveuni for the surgery.

For her to reach the hospital she had to take a bus ride through the mountains and then a 6 hour ferry ride across the raging sea. I had travelled to Lambasa from Taveuni island to meet Dahn. It was very difficult to get there as there was forest fires in the mountains when I took the trip through the mountain pass and the man who was supposed to coordinate Dahn and I to meet was nowhere to be found on Taveuni or in Lambasa.

Dahn has been restricted to her property for 18 years, she's never left. Cutting the wood for her cooking fires. She complied but apparently was not very happy with her son. She told me that she knows every single square inch of her house. She knows where every pot and every pan is and that is how she manages by herself.

The next morning, I got on the bus at 3:30 A.M. so I could travel back to Taveuni. I had several bags of my gear and equipment so I was hoping that I could sit by myself for the ride back to the ferry dock. Everyone had piled on and I still had the extra seat beside me but as we started to pull away, I heard someone shouting. The bus stopped and Dahn got on it.

Her son couldn't accompany her because of the cost of the ferry and bus, but she was seated in the only empty spot. At first she didn't realize who I was. But after trying to communicate to her, she leaned across and gave me a hug. We spent the bus ride and boat trip beside each other in silence but if the bus bounced or the boat shook, she would move closer to me and cuddle my shoulder.

I was very happy to see her surgery go off without a hitch as I watched from within the operating theater. She stayed over night at the hospital and early the next morning the surgeons came around to the patient wards and removed their bandages the next morning.

They were all given mild pain-killers and antiseptic drops to keep it clean. Dahn was beside herself and I watched her bless the surgeons and nurses after the bandage was removed and she saw clearly for the first time in almost 50 years.







































Melvin Durán

# BLANCO











**Ana Victoria Torres.** How was your experience studying filmmaking in Dominican Republic?

**Melvin Duran.** I came from Constanza to Santo Domingo to do my studies but after a while I felt very limited there, nothing was happening and what little did happen revolved around the same social circle, something that I don't particularly like. Personally Santo Domingo, the capital of Dominican Republic, in an artistic level is the same as Constanza.

I started applying to different programs outside of DR, later on I was able to travel to Madrid and continue cinematography studies, where I obtained a more significant training. One of the main subjects that interested me as a student was to do an actual scientific research of cinema, to study and comprehend this artform. Imagine how hard was to do that in Santo Domingo, when we don't even have a library devoted to cinematography. My story is inherently linked to the deficiencies of the Dominican system.

**AVT.** I identify with that in the sense that as a Dominican born and raised in Santo Domingo, as I grew older I realized that my city was lacking many things in the cultural aspect.

**MD.** For me is a project of city that hasn't taken complete form yet, maybe in 50 or 70 years it will.

**AVT.** Some say that the city has an inveterate urbanism which translates into the social, it does not have a solid foundation.

**MD.** I arrived in Santo Domingo 10 years ago and particularly can say that what I have seen in an evolutionary level is very disorganized, there's no unity, not only in an architectural and urbanistic plane, but in a sociological and philosophical aspect as well. It's very hard to analyze a city like this. One of my biggest ambitions when I came to Santo Domingo was to study cinematography as a way to portray my own

town, I was interested in capturing the essence of Constanza in film, for me small towns, specially Constanza, have a very rich essence and their own idiosyncrasy, therefore I wanted to tell certain events that are very much linked to the moral dignity of this small town.

**AVT.** This can be easily perceived in Blanco, your first film, not only because it takes place in Constanza, but also as you focus on day to day live, you follow around these characters in a subtle and observational manner.

**MD.** I like the idea that these individuals that have nothing in an economical level, are not even connected to technology, don't get to live the "great" things of the modern world, but for me they confirm that there is beauty and moral dignity in the world.

More importantly that my characters are albinos and that they live in scarcity, what impressed me the most, and the main reason for making this film is the moral beauty, the bravery to live, the acceptance of their reality despite their limitations.

**AVT.** The imagery and aesthetics of the documentary say a lot about you as a filmmaker. All six main characters are albinos, and that played an important role in the visual direction of the project. How much of it was premeditated or a natural development of the story?

**MD.** The photography of the project was something that I gave a lot of thought, even by doing some color tests to prepare. That goes to show that at the end a documentary is another form of fiction, because you only capture a fragment of the reality of an individual and it goes through an editing process. In terms of the images, I did a photographic storyboard, and had several conversations with my director of photography about the importance of the pictures speaking for themselves and avoiding decadence. A concern of mine was that because some of my characters have a very damaged skin, as a re-



sult of their sensibility to the sun, I didn't want the photography of the film to exploit this aspect of their condition. Most of the documentaries that touch the albino subject, do it in a manner that highlights their lacerations, my objective was the opposite. I wanted in some way to show their beauty without hiding their imperfections.

**AVT.** Meaning that you didn't want to portray them in a sensationalist manner, that could have been a direction for the project if you wanted it to be.

**MD.** That was a photographic decision, I think if I had gone in that direction I would have created a separation between the spectator and the story, the characters would have been seen as victims.

**AVT.** What is your opinion on the creative process of an artist, how much room is in it for spontaneity?

**MD.** I recently watch a documentary about Jean Luc Godard where he said that: "when you're shooting a movie, everything that wasn't supposed to happen during filming happens, but at the end that was the movie you were looking to make all along". That not only applies to cinema, but also to different types of art, you as an artist have a general idea and that concept is the essence of your project. In Blanco the idea was to do a movie about human beings that happened to be albinos, I didn't want to mention albinism at all.

In all artistic expression, at least in my experience, exists an intuition, the tricky part is getting in touch with that feeling. Starting from intuition you work and work, and then the idea begins to take form, it's related to things occurring spontaneously, because at the end what is an artistic piece, if not more than the combination of small ideas that conform this big general concept. This happened to me a lot with the shooting of this documentary, basically in art you can't program anything.

The artistic process is very hard to described, for some people it takes longer, others act in a very intuitive manner and move faster.

**AVT.** Filmmakers are obviously driven by imag-

es, and for me one of the most interesting thing is when audiovisuals don't need a lot of dialogue, the images are so rich that they tell the story by themselves.

**MD.** Actually Hitchcock in a book by François Truffaut had a beautiful phrase about that, he said: "appeal to dialogue when you have no images to turn to".

**AVT.** So I wanted to ask, what gives you pleasure visually? what is aesthetically attractive to you?

**MD.** Well I'm very influenced by the old school of Aristotle's, I really like harmony, even in chaos. Order in a composition, for example: well defined horizontal and vertical columns. I don't even know how to answer this question, it's very hard to tell.

**AVT.** Do you consider there is certain importance in having parameters or a style guide in whatever you're creating?

**MD.** Sure it is, doing my movie I had the concept of an observational film, which meant images telling everything and not focusing on dialogue, there wasn't going to be a voice over, imagine how commonly is used the voice over to explain a documentary, but I was adamant and didn't want to use it. To achieve my concept I needed potent images, not only visual but also profound emotionally.

I think it has to do with how much you're connected with what you're telling. With the characters in my film I bonded in a way that we were practically a family and shared everything, for me art has to have two important things: first, an encounter with your own humanity and the world and secondly, even though it's not like that for every body, it should make you a better person.

At the end I have my own limitations like everybody does, that's why I turned to art, as it allowed me to transgress the social limitations that I possess, coming from a small cultural background.

**AVT.** Do you think in daily life the human being looks for ways to reinvent itself, to wash away some experiences and resurface?







**MD.** This can be only answered in a personal way, taken in consideration that everybody has it's own experiences, but yes I think everybody does it in one way or another.

I'm opened in that sense, sometimes I think that people that look for fame are just looking for more love or maybe to redeem themselves, if it's the right way or not I don't know, however I do think that everybody tries to do it in some form, not only in art. The thing is that the majority of people, we get lost in this search, and always end up back to square one, probably we should just go through an acceptance process that helps us understand that that's life, that there's nothing to look for.

At the end art exists as a cause of this, it's a path to deal with the unresolved issues that are a product of this constant human search for reinvention.

**AVT.** Nowadays people from artists, actors, to politicians, doctors or even, kids in high school see social media as a platform to highlight their individuality, "I am this person and you have to follow me because X or Y". Do you think the times we're living in showcase the need humans have to shine or "brillar" as we would say in Dominican Republic?

**MD.** I definitely think so, is related with something known in Spain as technological narcissism, one thing is recognizing my individuality as a person, with my capabilities and limitations, and another very different is to live in complete self absorption.

Social platforms like Facebook are a filter where you show the best of side of you but you don't present your true face, only the idealistic version of you. People believe so little in themselves that they are always looking for validation, approval. I personally only use social media to gain knowledge and always end up with the sentiment of encountering fakeness. When I was in Madrid they always used as an example of this, activism and how once you made an online invite thousands of people signed up but only a few actually showed up.

**AVT.** It's easier to be an activist these days, but to actually go across the screen and take it to a tangible level, that doesn't always happens.

**MD.** Another thing that occurs is that social networks have a starting point in the entertainment world, they want to turn everybody in a celebrity or a public figure, just notice how are they organized, the terms they use, like cover, as if they were speaking of a magazine, publications and ask questions like what are you thinking or feeling?

I doubt that they really promote individualism, being unique has no relation to something that takes place in a fake environment. Individuality is about how do you deal with the world outside when you have to reaffirm yourself as a person. A person that is sure about herself doesn't need this validation, you don't care if people applaud you or not, because you know that at the end all of that can go away easily, it's very superficial and shows that people right now just want to be loved, this is the loneliest time in human history.

**AVT.** What are you working on right now?

**MD.** I'm working on my first fiction, stepping away from the documentary even though it's going to be filmed like a fake documentary. The characters in this film have like in Blanco a noticeable physical characteristic, they have dwarfism, but most importantly it's about a mother and son in a very difficult and challenging relationship. The movie will portray the bond between this strong, latin, overprotective mother and her sometimes chauvinist son. One of the main subjects in the film it's forgiveness and it will take place in Constanza.







Remo Polack

# UNIFORM

































**WOJTEK  
BLECHARZ**



**Ismael Ogando.** What would you say are the key elements to make the arrangement of a composition?

**Wojtek Blecharz.** It depends, but in general in composing; the crucial element is some sort of material, which should be arranged in time and space. I compose music, so for me the most basic element/material is sound and silence, but recently I have started to pay more and more attention to different contexts on how sound can be projected in space: how making sound is related to physicality of a performer, how one can relate sound to non-musical elements of the composition. I treat composing in a very broad, performative and personal way, I do not limit composition just to a piece of music, which is supposed to be performed for the audience, this is just one aspect of composing, to me the entire process and experience before the performance: research, reading, improvising, experimenting, crisis or insomnia are included in the work. I could also answer that the key element to the composition is a viewer/listener.

**IO.** Is there any mnemotechnical method in your practice?

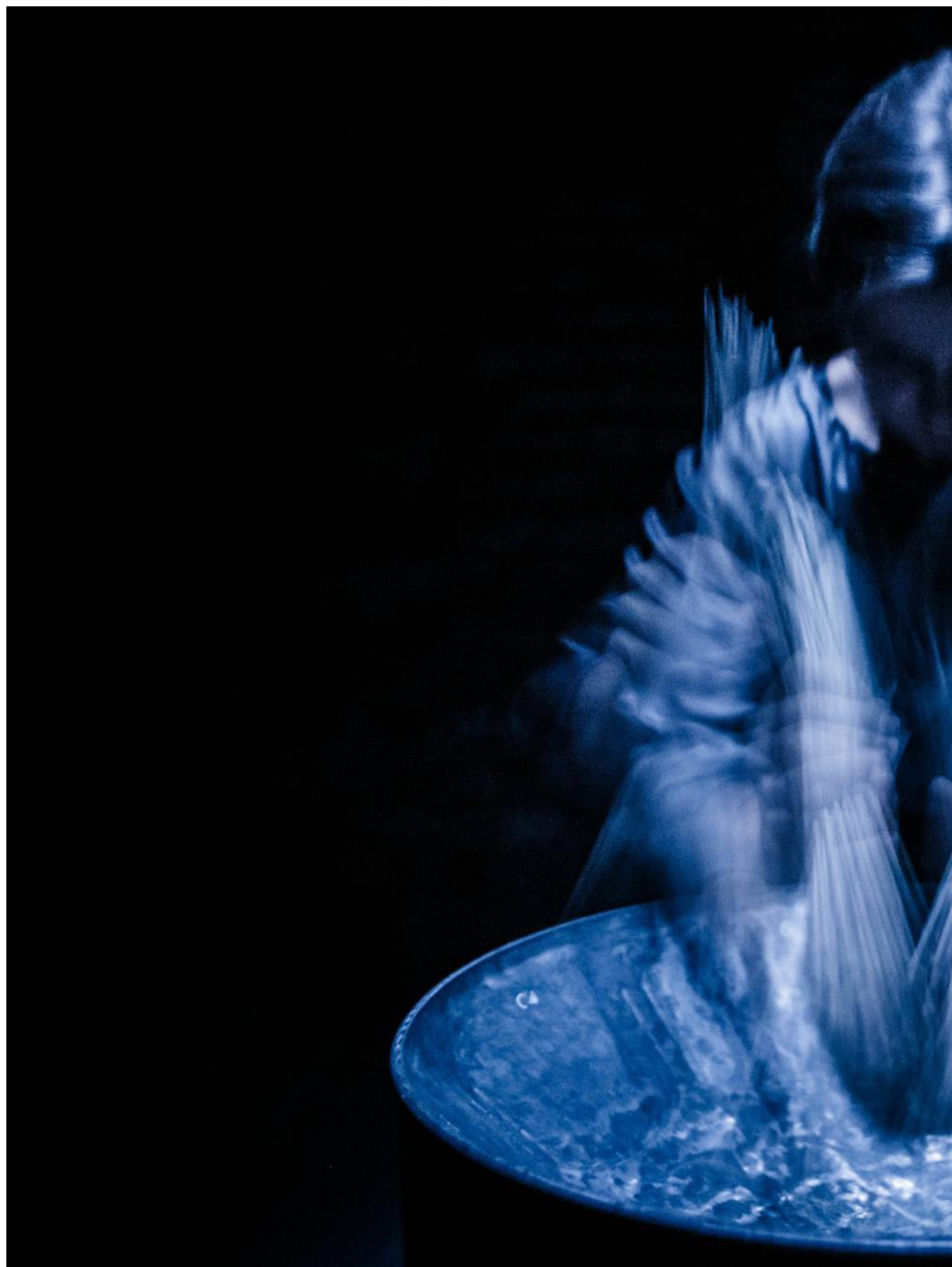
**WB.** Kind of... the mechanism of memory became the main topic of my opera-installation *Transcriptum*, commissioned by Grand Theater-National Opera in Warsaw. In *Transcriptum* the audience (150 persons) is divided in 5 groups and explores 5 main sites of the opera, which are located in vast off-stage spaces of the opera house. Each group is lead by a guide along a trail and visits the 5 sites of *Transcriptum*, but each group visits those spaces in a different order, each order is good. The viewers encounter on their way musicians, objects, installations and arrangements, which belong to the libretto of the opera. The viewer must observe and remember, the more she or he notices and remembers the more comprehensible

the story of the opera becomes.

**IO.** Say, how do you embed personal memories into your compositions?

**WB.** In my music this is a very large topic, since I work both with memory, but also I usually say that although I work with sound in a very abstract way, my music grows out of strictly personal experiences. And this is not about my ego; I am simply not ready yet to make art about some universal truths or topics, which I can't relate to. I find it interesting that contemporary music is often highly intellectualized, overdosed with technology, but avoids personal or emotional discourse, which is possessed and taken from contemporary music composers by pop-culture. In my piece *K'an* for steel drum and ca. 130 sticks a percussionists tosses, scatters and arranges a handful of wooden sticks inside of a metal drum. The physical gestures of dropping, tossing, shaking and moving the sticks inside of the steel drum determines the sound and music. The performer is trying to arrange the sticks, to find some sort of order for 130 pieces, to find logic in those spiky wooden arrangements. *K'an* belongs to my previously mentioned opera-installation *Transcriptum*, which is focused on structure of psychological trauma. Trauma is so extreme, that metaphorically speaking "goes" outside of our memory – this is why traumatic experiences can be repressed and return to memory in disintegrated pieces, flashbacks and fragments. In *K'an* the percussion player reenacts this type of shattered structure by rearranging wooden sticks, trying to put all the elements of the "story" together.

**IO.** The world of sound, in particular for classic avant-garde features quite abstract, but in the other hand they exemplifies just a different language, which is equally palpable or intelligible, do you use any sort of storyline for your soundscapes?







**WB.** I am not sure if I would call it a storyline, but in terms of my “language” I always search for sounds on my own, even if I don’t know how to play an instrument, I always spend some quality time with it. For instance when I was composing *The map of tenderness* for cello solo, I would sit with the cello everyday for a month in front of the mirror and touch, tap, rub the instrument at different places, explore its “body/territory” to create some sort of sonic map, to find sounds which I like, which respond to my imagination, and sonic identity. In this particular piece the cello refers to what Julia Kristeva calls an “objects of mourning”, the cello becomes another body, placed between legs of a female performer, who is trying to act normally, but there is that thing attached to her body, and the cello-the object of mourning, becomes a mask, a pendulum, a lover an object of tenderness or aggression.

**IO.** What about the performance of the pieces, how does the musician/composer dynamic usually develop?

**WB.** During my doctoral studies at University of California San Diego I was taught that collaboration between composer and performer is a crucial element of the process, this is how music grows out of real experience: I show my language to a performer and she or he shows me, what I can do with that language. I can tell that I am lucky with really wonderful performers, my last concert in January with Ensemble Berlin Pianopercussion at Konzerthaus Berlin was a real pleasure, but on the other hand my last concert with Forbidden City Chamber Orchestra in Beijing was a bit disappointing because we did not have that much rehearsing time as I expected. I am aware that sometimes I can be pain in the ass and ask Anna Radziejewska – an amazing singer for whom I compose my vocal music, to sing a part of my opera non stop for 1 hour 30 minutes in an old dusty cellar and in almost total darkness... so sometimes it is love-hate dynamics.

**IO.** In relation to space, I missed for 1

minute the chance to attend your portrait-concert at the Studio 1 in Bethanien for the KlangWerkstatt festival, any particular reason for the sharpness?

**WB.** This is my new approach to a concert of “contemporary classical music”, which is presented in full theatrical setting, with lighting and without applause between each piece. I am trying to create a special space for you as a viewer, my pieces are usually very quiet, focused and involve element of music and instrumental theater. If someone comes late it could completely destroy the energy of the concert and interrupt other viewers.

**IO.** In the quest for sonic elements for a piece, how hygiene do your choices turn. Say, how do you polish, capture and remember what you want to be heard?

**WB.** I think that hygiene is important is for me when it comes to musical notation, to writing down a musical score. I am a total notation-nerd and I always want to create the best way to express my musical ideas in the most communicative graphic way and sometimes it takes more time than composing music. In some cases my scores are followed by videos, which explain how to play specific moments of my music. The score of *blacksnowfalls* for timpano solo goes together with almost 70 video clips, which explain ca. 70 different hand gestures, that have to be memorized and performed by a percussionist. Hygiene or discipline becomes also more and more important during everyday work and it is related to distraction, so I am learning how to compose with hygienic/clean imagination, which is not contaminated with social media or multitasking. Mediation helps.

Music and Shamanism are ancient bedfellows, what is your personal philosophy about ritual and your music?

I am not sure yet, but currently I am trying to answer lots of questions about the status and role of modern music: why do we need this type of music and where can it take our perception. I have chosen this type of music on purpose, because I like



the fact, that modern music invites you to a very special: intellectual/ spiritual space. This is not music just to please your senses, for background while you clean your apartment. This type of music should alter senses, stimulate to think/contemplate/ relate. I would like to grasp your entire attention and offer you a sonic space, where you can immerse your thoughts with sounds; I think this approach makes it close to some sort of ritual.

**IO.** How do your Polish nationality, American training and now Berlin homebase inform your current production?

**WB.** Despite very bad current political situation in Poland, I have many exciting projects scheduled for 2016: a “park-opera”, an installation featuring especially designed space for listening (“sound-oasis”) which can be located at any spot of a city and a new music theater composed for non-musicians. My 6-year doctoral program in San Diego gave me lots of time to prepare myself, to collect ideas, to search for identity, sounds and concepts. I moved to Berlin in August and last months were very important for my spiritual change and awareness, I am truly happy that my next projects are focused more on performative aspects, installation, experiment, working on sound through improvisation, working on music by guiding musicians instead of bringing a score and saying: now just learn it and play it!

**IO.** What is coming in the new future?

**WB.** In June I will present my new piece commissioned by Goethe Institute in Warsaw and Polish Institute in Berlin. This piece is related to anniversaries of those institutions celebrated this year, so the topic of my composition was supposed to be somehow focused on memory. The curator of the project Jacek Skolimowski was digging in the history of the Polish Institute building located at Burgstrasse 27 and discovered that in the 90s behind the Institute there used to be one of the most important clubs in Berlin called WMF, spe-

cializing in drum’n’bass music. Next we found a local sound artist Karl Heinz Jeron, who used to work at the WMF in the 90s. Karl will build handmade electronic instruments for me and I will compose music for those instruments. The installation will take place in 4 different spaces of the Polish Institute: one focused on complexity of the rhythm, the other one focused on embodiment of bass sounds – both spaces will allow the viewer/listener to shift the perception by changing the position of his own body in relationship to the sound. Two other parts of the installation will be focused on memories of people who used to hang out at WMF and on the phenomenon of a rave. There will be a cello player in one of the rooms, performing a non stop 3-day long piece for cello with electronics.

DRE





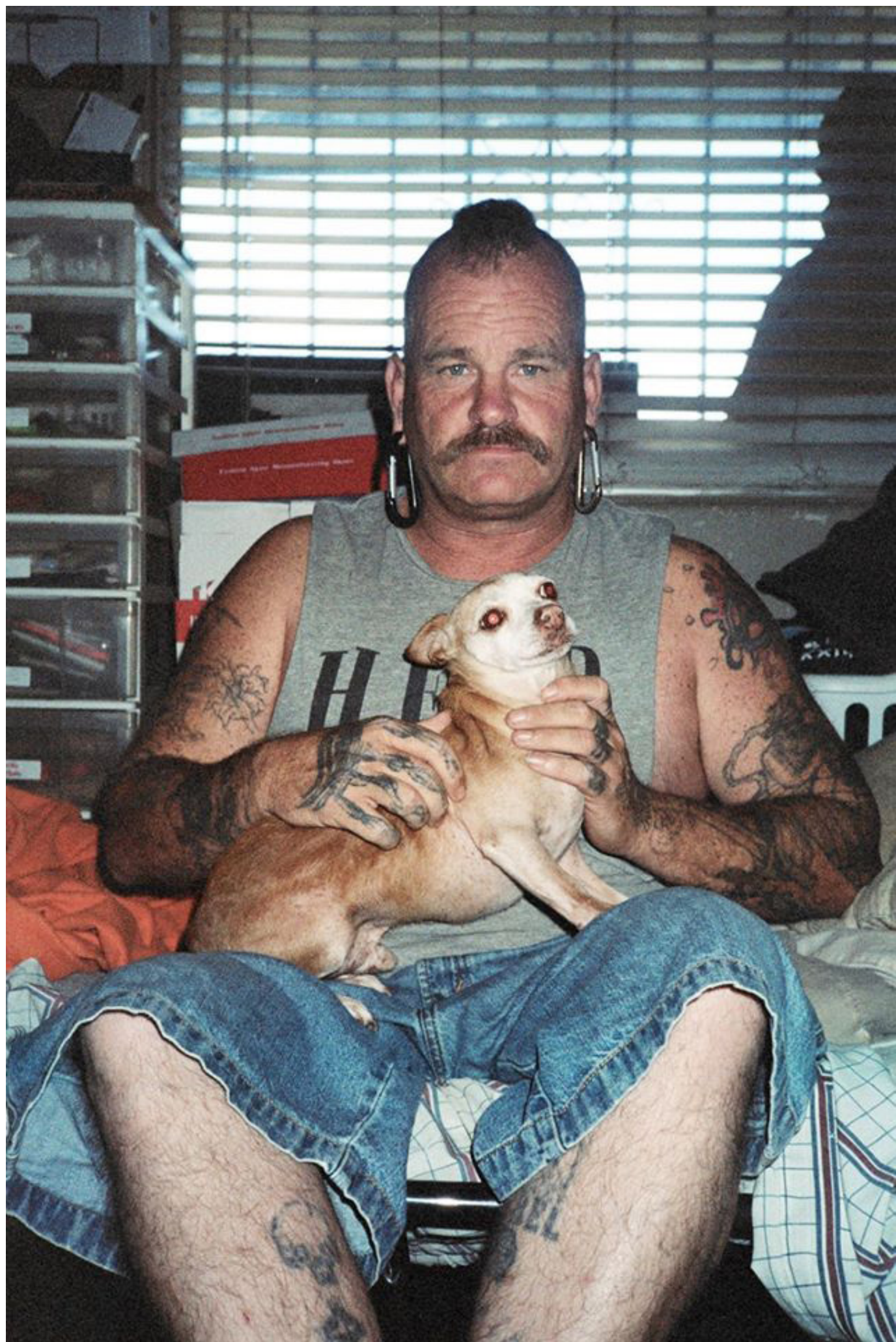
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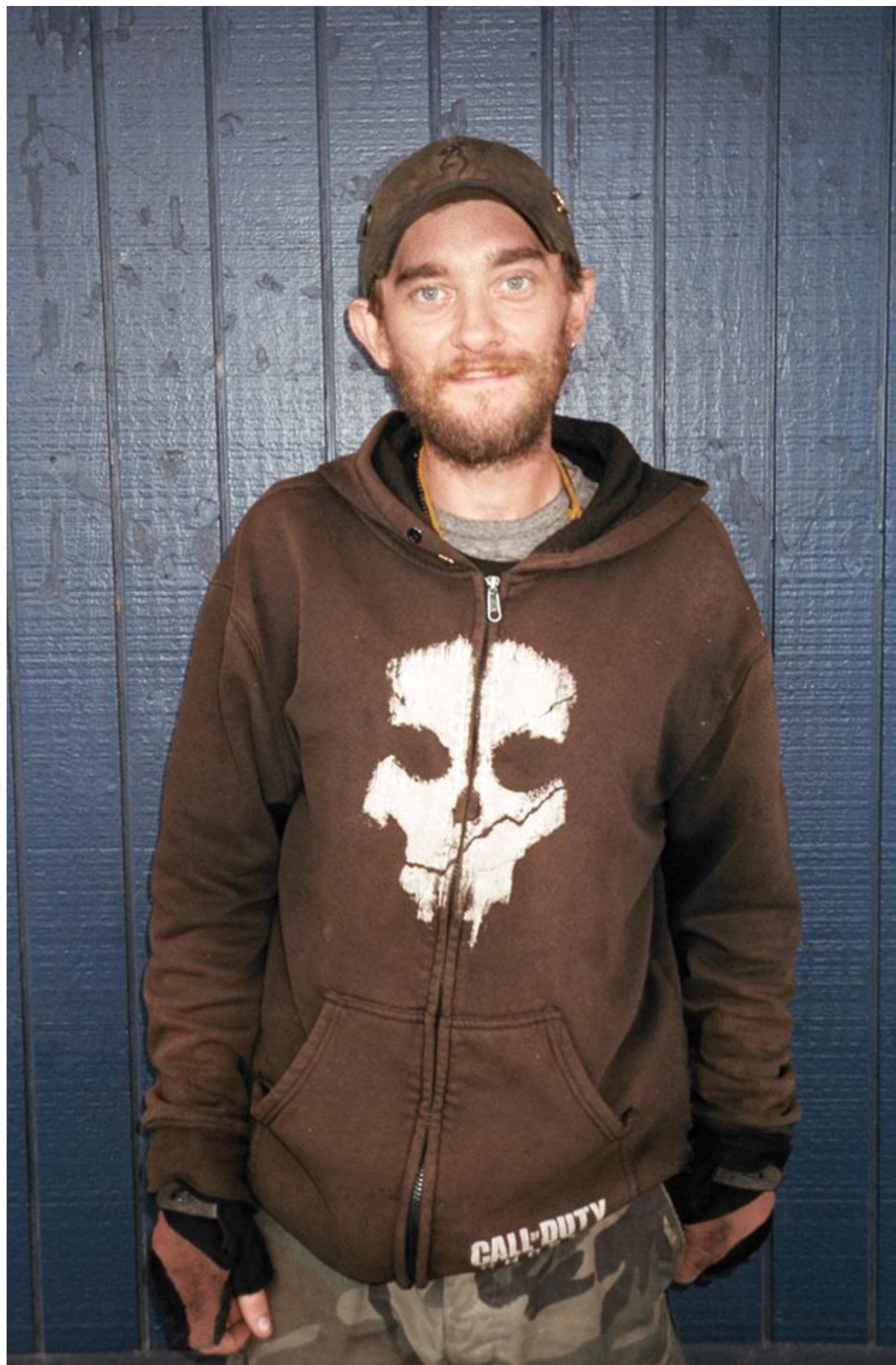
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Discørdant































**SLOUGHING**





Guillaume Guérin

OFF





Previous page: Postdamer Platz / view from Wilhelmstraße 94 - 10117 Berlin





Leipzigerstraße 1 - 10117 Berlin









Yorckstraße 41 - 10965 Berlin









Merhingdamm 48 - 10951 Berlin









Gerichtstraße 46 - 13347 Berlin









Platz der Luftbrücke - 12101 Berlin









Columbiadamm 94 - 10965 Berlin



# THE MAKING HUMBOLDT-F





# OF BERLIN'S ORUM





# Negotiating History and the Cultural Politics of Place

After more than 15 years of intense public debate about the future of the Spree Island and the Palace Square (**Schlossplatz**) in Berlin, the German Bundestag decided in July 2002 for the much-contested reconstruction of the historical Prussian city palace. The palace, having served as the principal residence of Brandenburg margraves and electors and later of Prussian kings and the German Emperor, was partly demolished during WWII and subsequently, in 1950, blasted by the GDR government of **Walter Ulbricht**. In 1973, the Palace of the Republic (**Palast der Republik**) was built on the eastern side of the Palace Square, housing the GDR People's Parliament and serving as popular venue for cultural events after its inception in 1976. Importantly, the 2002 decision implied that the Palace of the Republic, one of the most important architectural monuments of the former GDR's capital in the now unified Berlin, would be torn down. It was decided that it should give place to a new building in the cubature of the former city palace, including the reconstruction of its historical baroque facades on three sides of the building.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion about the Palace of the Republic's demolition and the reconstruction of the city palace has been one of the most heated architectural debates of recent years both nationally and internationally. On a superficial level, it was a debate about aesthetics as well as deliberations of urban building in the capital's centre of a unified Germany. However, as historian **Alexander Schug** among others has noted, it was also a conflict about the right way of dealing with GDR history, about *embedding new German lines of tradition in public memory*.<sup>2</sup> According to **Beate Binder**'s ethnographic study about the *city centre issue*, a recurring argument for the palace's reconstruction was to re-establish the city ensemble's *integrity*.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the then-existing building ensemble with the Palace of the Republic on the Eastern side of the Palace Square was regarded as a break in continuity: *The history of the Historical Centre ends with the*

*war of bombs, and the GDR government has committed the error of ignoring history*.<sup>4</sup> Yet: *Who claims that with the reconstruction of the city palace the cityscape is being restored, either fully ignores the current ensemble – sees just an 'empty square' – or declassifies it as inferior, more precisely as insignificant, and puts it to free disposal*.<sup>5</sup>

The basis for the 2002 parliamentary decision was the final report of the International Expert Commission **Historische Mitte Berlin** (Historical Centre of Berlin).<sup>6</sup> The commission, installed in early 2001 to formulate advice about the future usage of the square,<sup>7</sup> adopted the proposal made earlier by the then-president of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, SPK),<sup>8</sup> **Klaus-Dieter Lehmann**, to move the *Dahlem Museums of non-European arts and cultures as public institutions to the historical centre*.<sup>9</sup> Initially, the commission followed Lehmann's initiative, independently from the exact architectural composition to be decided upon and decided for the installation of the **Humboldt-Forum** as, so goes the rather vague initial characterization, a *place for dialogue, of civic participation and coequal contemporaneity of the world cultures*.<sup>10</sup> According to the expert commission, three institutions turned out to qualify best with regard to the historical location at Berlin's Palace Square vis-à-vis Museum Island and Humboldt University and the content-related ideas for usage: the SPK with their Ethnological Museum and Museum of Asian Art; the Central and Regional Library of Berlin as a broadly established and much frequented public institution; and the Humboldt University of Berlin with parts of its university collections. Regarding the two museums, the move of the *non-European*<sup>11</sup> collections would enable a juxtaposition between the arts of the European civilizations as represented on Museum Island, and their *non-European equivalent with the whole wealth of the Berlin collections of art from East Asia, India, Africa, pre-Columbian- and Mesoamerica as well as Oceania*.<sup>12</sup>



**This concept stands in a close tradition to the 19th century idea of the Universal Museum: The endeavour to represent an encyclopaedic history of humankind by means of collecting, preserving and exhibiting its arts and cultures:** As much as this idea is deeply rooted in a Western tradition of assessing the world through establishing taxonomies of its (artistic, culture-historical, ethnological etc.) artifacts, its implementation in 19th century Berlin has also been an important factor in the rivalry with other European metropolises, especially London and Paris.<sup>13</sup> The Universal Museum functions also as an important reference in current debates: The triangle of European high art (Museum Island), non-European arts and cultures (Humboldt-Forum) as well as of the sciences, represented by the scientific collections of Humboldt University, is not only said to resemble a unique “sanctuary for art and culture”,<sup>14</sup> but is last but not least regarded as an important selling point in the cultural landscape of European cities.<sup>15</sup> One important reason for both the museum and the university collections was the argument that they both have their origin in the *Kunst-kammer*, which was located in the city palace. For the International Expert Commission, Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt would be the references that best symbolize the *humanism, the great history of German and Berlin science, but also the fascination of the cultural remote*<sup>16</sup> that the Humboldt-Forum is meant to be standing for. The combination of the three respective institutions was regarded as strengthening this meaning.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the *Agora* is planned as a space that will function as a *place for discussions where the major socio-political topics will be debated by an impressive array of speakers, becoming an integral part of our presentation of world cultures*.<sup>18</sup> According to **Martin Heller**, who has been in charge of the content for the Agora since 2010, it will be a space of contemporaneity that seeks to interact with the historical collections, covering the latest developments in contemporary art from Africa, America and Asia.<sup>19</sup>

The public debates regarding the plans for the Humboldt-Forum have been manifold and can barely be summarized in short. Artists, architects, city planners, museum representatives, cultural scientists and many

others have expressed everything from skepticism to open contestation about the historico-political investment made by reconstructing the palace in its former cubature with the historical baroque facades.<sup>20</sup>

One recurring argument has been that a reconstruction of the palace would be a historically problematic gesture of identity politics towards an alleged 19th century Prussian glory. As noted by the architecture theoretician and an active participant in the debates from early on, **Philipp Oswalt**, the plea *Let's give the city its identity back* made by one of the most outspoken proponents of the palace, **Wilhelm von Boddien**, establishes the time before 1918 as *the actual identity-establishing moment for Berlin: To build on the 19th century with the 21st and thereby erase the marks of the 20th century is an expression of a comprehensible – even if highly problematic – desire when considering German history*.<sup>21</sup> Even one of the expert commission members has explained his dissenting opinion with regard to the reconstruction along these lines: *The reconstruction of the former Prussian palace would (...) be a politically and historically wrong message*.<sup>22</sup> Artist and art historian **Khadija Carroll La** has argued that the *strategy of adaptive reuse has in many other cases proved to be a more successful subversion of previous programmes, yet this site on Museum Island, a palimpsest of German politics, will see the return of a phantom past*.<sup>23</sup>

**In light of the many public criticisms, the expert commission's advice to make the Palace Square a place for the world cultures has enabled the plan of reconstruction to gain great momentum:** The idea to move the non-European collections into a reconstructed Prussian palace vis-à-vis the world famous site for the exhibition of the arts of European civilization, Museum Island, seems to have given the project its ultimate legitimization. However, the plan comes with its very own set of problems and only increases the problematics of investing in the reconstruction of a 19th century architectural ensemble. In the past years, ethnological museums have been subject to increased critical scrutiny by activists and scholars from a range of disciplines such as history and anthropology. As a result of



these criticisms there has been much reflection in the field of museum studies, often followed by paradigmatic shifts in the museums themselves. How can we make sense of the making of the Humboldt-Forum in light of these developments? What are the historical narratives that made the collections qualify for the move to this symbolic place within the German capital? It is especially the ethnological collections that are the material reminders of the intertwinement between colonial structures of exchange and the ethnographic project around the turn of the previous century. How, then, are the recent discussions about colonial history, relevant to the planning of this *Grand Projet of the 21st century*<sup>24</sup> as they have finally, yet slowly become part of the public discourse in Germany? What cultural logic do we see at play when the idea of moving the non-European collections, as invoked so uncritically by many, nevertheless seems to give the palace its ultimate plausibility? As I will show with regard to the Berlin context, the planning of the Humboldt-Forum both resembles a broader trend of negotiating the current role of ethnological collections in Western museum institutions and follows a cultural-political logic quite specific to Berlin.<sup>25</sup>

**The cultures of the world in the centre of Berlin: Cosmopolitan place-making as narrativizing history:** The Humboldt-Forum is intended to bring the arts and cultures of Asia, Africa, America, Australia and Oceania right into the heart of Berlin and form a central site for non-European cultures.<sup>26</sup> Despite the diversity of the involved institutions to be moving to the Palace Square with their respective collections, aims and public functions, the public advertising statements are much focused on the non-European collections now exhibited in Berlin's peripheral district of Dahlem. The above quote thereby reveals a problematic that is constitutive of the project as much as it is constitutive still to the majority of ethnographic museums up until today: we do find all continents represented except for Europe. *Cultures of the world* is thus used to denote the non-European cultures, leaving out that part of the world, which traditionally has claimed to hold the definitional power over what *non-Western* arts and cultures are or should

be perceived to be. This not only equals a perpetuation of the fundamental division between Europe and its various *Others*, which has been an essential rationale in the history of ethnology and which has been widely critiqued both within and beyond the discipline;<sup>27</sup> it also reproduces the blind spot in the representation of the *Others*, which is constitutive to the history of ethnographic politics of display. Despite the assertion that the Humboldt-Forum, with its non-European historical collections, is aimed at completing the Museum Island as the world famous place for the arts of European civilization, the basic dividing line between the two is nevertheless being redrawn.<sup>28</sup>

Especially with regard to the ethnological collections, which comprise about 500,000 objects and constitute, by far, the larger part of the two Dahlem museums, there seems to be a further fundamental contradiction at play. On the one hand, they have been subject to numerous historical studies that have shown the colonial background of large parts of the collections: Especially after the beginning of Germany's colonial rule in the African continent, which dates from the **Berlin Africa Conference** in 1884/85, the colonial infrastructure served as the very basis for amassing large parts of the present-day African collections. In this context, the **Royal Museum of Ethnology** in Berlin profited from a Federal Council resolution made in February 1889, after which the ethnographic collections gathered on government-financed expeditions had to be relinquished to the Berlin Museum.<sup>29</sup> Aside from the ethnologists themselves, collectors were all those who, to quote from a manual for collecting edited by the Royal Museum for Ethnology and issued several times between 1898 and 1914, "through their occupation as colonial officials and officers, as missionaries, merchants etc. are forced to live among natural peoples, and who have the priceless opportunity due to continuous contact to learn about customs, mindsets and lifestyle habits."<sup>30</sup> Austrian anthropologist Felix von Luschan, who joined the Berlin museum in 1885 and later became director of the departments of Africa and Oceania, once talked about the museum as *the greatest monument to our colonial troops*.<sup>31</sup> **Adolf Bastian**, the founder of the museum



and the founding father of the discipline of ethnology in Germany, was internationally adored for his successes of acquiring objects.<sup>32</sup> However, in reducing the colonial implications of the history of ethnographic collecting and exhibiting to the complex and often violent practices of acquisition, one risks losing sight of an epistemic aspect: Even though ethnology stood in an uneasy relationship to the popular spectacles of live exhibits of people brought from the colonies, the *Völkerschauen*<sup>33</sup>, its practices of knowledge production must nevertheless be seen as part of a regime of representation in which the cultures on display were constructed as constitutive *Other* to the civilized, culturally advanced European *Self*. Exactly because of the ethnologists' ongoing attempt to set themselves apart from the domain of popular culture by insisting on their empiricism that would follow natural scientific methods, their institution was a prominent, socially influential and, last but not least, politically well-supported locus for constructing knowledge about *natural peoples*.<sup>34</sup> It is last, but not least, the field of ethnological museums, where this history has been subjected to critical historical analysis. Christine Stelzig, formerly employed at the Berlin museum and now director of the ethnological museum in Munich, has concluded her historical study of the African Department at the Berlin institution stating that with regard to the institutionalized ethnological research on Africa, a detailed history about this early colonial knowledge production has yet to be written.<sup>35</sup>

**The rhetoric of many of the institutional agents involved in the Humboldt-Forum's planning process stands in a quite stark contrast to such critical references:** Here, it is the ethnological collections that are invoked to best serve for showing to the world Berlin's tradition of *scientific curiosity towards the unfamiliar and the other in the world*, as Hermann Parzinger, president of the SPK, has framed it.<sup>36</sup> One important underlying argument for this connection is the collections' origin in the courtly *Kunst-kammer*", which was situated in the palace since the turn to the 17th century<sup>37</sup> and from where they were partly moved to the Altes Museum in the 1830s and, in the 1850s, to the *Kunst-kammer* in Friedrich August

Stüler's Neues Museum on what would later be named **Museum Island**. Characteristic feature of the *Kunst-kammer* was that it did not separate naturalia from art or ethnographic materials as it became common in the later, discipline-specific modern museums. The *Kunst-kammer* was regarded as conveying a summarily overview over the universe in a much more objective manner than travel accounts were granted to be.<sup>38</sup> It was understood as resembling the world in a mimetic relationship like a *macrocosm in microcosm*. In recent years, the *Kunst-kammer* has become an increased reference point in museum practice, be it by means of the presentation of objects from the late Renaissance and the baroque era in the mode of display of the time,<sup>39</sup> through special exhibitions on the related histories of science and the museum,<sup>40</sup> or just as a rather literal reference for smaller art spaces.<sup>41</sup> Art historian and historian of science Robert Felfe has argued that this attention cannot be explained without referencing the many recent studies in the field of history of science, in which the cabinets of wonder and curiosity have been examined as *complex cultural phenomenon, in which art historical, science historical and socio-historical aspects overlap*.<sup>42</sup> It is especially Horst Bredekamp, Professor of Art History at Humboldt University and active participant in the planning of the Humboldt-Forum from early on, who has stretched not only the genealogical ties to the palace, but who has also emphasized the *Kunst-kammer's* methodical implications of ordering for the Humboldt-Forum. Invoking the tradition of Wilhelm Leibniz' *Theatrum naturae et artis*,<sup>43</sup> Bredekamp calls for the model of a *Weltmuseum* (world museum) in the sense that it was the *Kunst-kammer* in which *objects of nature, the sciences, the arts and of ethnology were collected in the non-hierarchical classification of a research intense knowledge theatre*.<sup>44</sup>

It is striking that in the public accounts as quoted from here, there have been, so far, no noticeable connecting lines between the history of the museum as represented by the *Kunst-kammer* and the broader political history of the Brandenburg-Prussian era, for whose electors the city palace served as residence. It is specifically the time of the *Kunst-kammer's* location in the palace, when











**Andreas Schlüter** (1659-1714) and later **Johann Friedrich Eosander von Göthe** (1669-1728) built the baroque facades that are now going to be reconstructed with the help of private donations.<sup>45</sup>

It is also the same time when Great Elector **Friedrich Wilhelm von Brandenburg-Preußen** established the first German colony **Groß Friedrichsburg** on the African west coast, which lasted from 1683 until 1717, and entered into the transatlantic slave trade. Regarding the **Kunstammer**, the resulting question should then also be how its politics of collecting and exhibiting are connected to these geopolitical developments, for which the reconstructed palace as the former political centre of control ultimately serves as a historical reference. Can they really be accounted as such an unprejudiced endeavour as is claimed in the present Humboldt-Forum characterizations? In his historical study of three practitioners of early modern collecting in Germany and England, **Caspar Schmalkalden** (1616-1673), **Johann Michael Wansleben** (1635-1679), and **John Wintrop Jr.** (1606-1676), **Dominik Collet** has argued that a closer look at their collecting practices *suggests a view of the non-European world that was far from unbiased*.<sup>46</sup> On the contrary: Instead of providing a fresh and unbiased look, early museums portrayed distant lands as Europe's primitive other. They presented non-Europeans as static, timeless, and heathen people close to nature. They ignored the actual diversity and complexity of indigenous societies as well as the rapidly changing colonial world, the emerging hybrid societies, and the dramatic environmental transformations. Instead of cultural encounter early museums presented cultural separation.<sup>47</sup>

Borrowing from the **Kunstammer** for a present politics of display certainly is an interesting endeavour with regard to methodical questions about arranging artifacts, ideas and perspectives that, in the course of the modern museum's history, have been separated into distinct institutions with their respective conventions of display. Yet, the history of the Berlin **Kunstammer** should also and first of all be interrogated with regard to its role in constructing and shaping a view of the world wherein ideas of European *Self*

and non-European *Other* were established. Regarding the methodical implications, it would then be an interesting question how a politics of display could ultimately serve as reflecting those very museum constructions by means of bringing together objects that have thus far been exhibited (or stored away) in very different institutional settings throughout Berlin.

Last, but not least, to make such historical problematization fruitful for the Berlin context would be of great importance because of the recent examinations of German colonial history in a more public realm. There is increasing involvement with Berlin as *colonial metropolis*,<sup>48</sup> and it has been the effort of many activist initiatives as well as of academic and artistic interventions over the past years to highlight the imprints of colonialism in the cityscape.<sup>49</sup> In this context, the history of the ethnological museum has also been subject to critical interventions, including the engagement with present museum politics of display.<sup>50</sup> It is in light of these attempts of translating critical reflections into a broader public debate about postcolonial Germany that many of the recent project descriptions and public invocations seem to fall back behind both artistic and academic problematizations. They invest in a rather **romanticized narrative** of the manifold historical connections and entanglements between Berlin and the *non-European* world.

With regard to recent discussion in the field of museums, the specific framing of the non-European collections is interesting at a time when museums with ethnographic collections slowly yet finally, start engaging in major paradigm shifts. These shifts are first and foremost a reaction to the manifold critiques from both within and outside the field of anthropology. In the context of these debates, one of the most recent and probably most controversially discussed museums has been the **Musée du Quai Branly** in Paris. On the one hand, it is an interesting example of the engagement of a museum in the exhibition of ethnographic collections as high art, yet, on the other hand, it nevertheless fails to break with the exoticist display techniques and to account for the problematic institutional history of the ethnographic museum project.<sup>51</sup>



Curator and critic Nora Sternfeld has described the museum's strategy as one of transformism, i.e. a strategy of institutional redefinition that very selectively commemorates colonial history and therefore ultimately disposes of the difficult histories that ethnographic museums face in one way or another.<sup>52</sup>

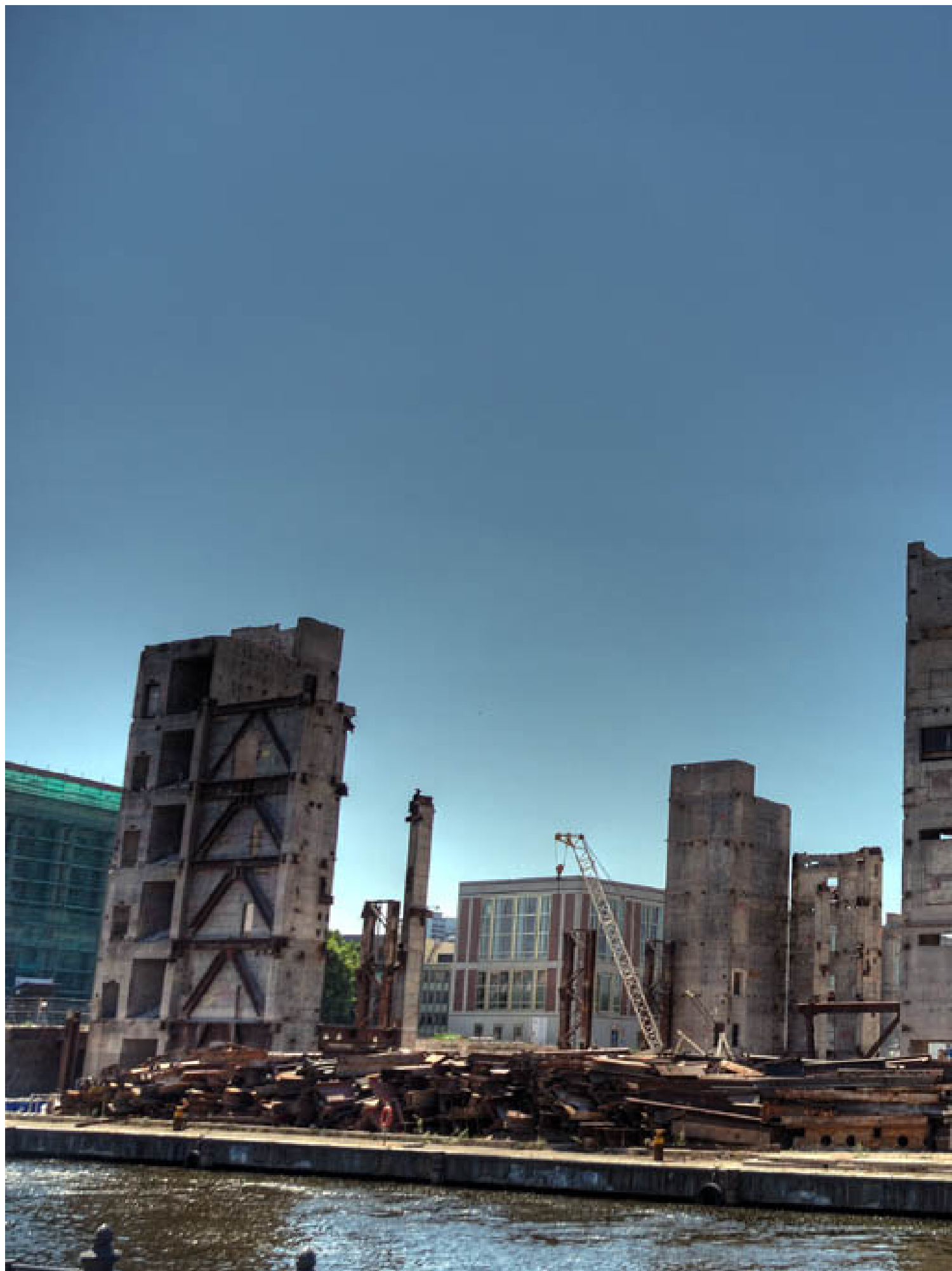
The move of the collections to what is considered the historical centre of Berlin, then, marks a symbolic shift not only in terms of the acknowledgement of the value of the collections, but also in terms of the kind in which the historical relationship between Germany and the respective *non-European* cultures are envisioned. And it is in the light of the institutional history that the advertisements of the Humboldt-Forum become so problematic. They not only render many of the recent efforts to highlight the colonial history's inscriptions into the Berlin cityscape invisible; they also invest in a historical redefinition of Germany's relationship with the world as one of enlightened curiosity that is devoid of much of the critical historiographies undertaken in historical scholarship and activist research.

With the Humboldt-Forum, we see the enactment of a cosmopolitanism that manages to turn the material reminders of complex historical relations of mutual entanglement, appropriation and exploitation into an asset of cosmopolitan understanding and mutuality. Beate Binder has argued that the new conception of the Palace Square exemplifies a *planned cosmopolitanism* (Hannerz).<sup>53</sup> The Humboldt-Forum herewith functions as a signifier for the openness of a city that, speaking with cultural geographer Karen Till, is *haunted with landscapes that simultaneously embody presences and absences, voids and ruins, intentional forgetting and painful remembering*.<sup>54</sup> However, we find here a specific practice of place-making that *mediate[s] and construct[s] social memory and identity by localizing personal emotions and defining social relations to the past*.<sup>55</sup> These relationships are defined by a means of employing the narrative of scientific curiosity – it is the engagement with a highly selective politics of remembrance, which enables the Humboldt-Forum to incorporate a cosmopolitanism that at the same time

serves as its very legitimacy. While indicating some awareness of the histories of colonial appropriation and entanglement, the institutional agents refrain from entering a controversy that could ultimately lead to a more radical questioning of the historical narrative employed. On the contrary, the Humboldt-Forum is envisioned as a site of identification where visitors can navigate the world and, very much in line with the history of the modern museum as a *factory of identity*,<sup>56</sup> can find a reassuring place in a time of perceived fragmentation. Instead of openly dealing with the multifaceted pasts that are especially manifest at this historical site of the Palace Square, thus, the Humboldt-Forum serves as a project through which Berlin's "historical centre" becomes a symbol for the German capital's openness towards the world, past and present.

**The turn towards “*dialogue*” and ‘multiperspectivity’: (re)enacting a colonial contact zone?** *Dialogue* and *multiperspectivity* have been keywords in theoretical reflection about museums at the latest since the New Museology.<sup>57</sup> As an effect of these debates and in light of the increased criticisms of ethnographic museum representation and of the power relations as they are fundamental to Western institutions holding collections of non-Western cultural contexts, they have also become more and more prominent in ethnographic museum practice.<sup>58</sup> It is therefore not surprising that they also take up a central role in the statements about the projected exhibition concepts for the non-European collections in the Humboldt-Forum. This starts on a very practical level: Viola König, director of the Ethnological Museum, has repeatedly stated that both the concepts and the exhibition architecture have to remain flexible. Following König, there has to be the possibility for directing new questions at the collections, including the backgrounds of their acquisition, without great financial effort. This entails avoiding a steady ensemble of glass cases that determines the exhibition design for years or decades to come.<sup>59</sup> Such an aim certainly hints at the central dilemma of museums: Among other structural issues, the costly exhibition interiors often lead to a standstill of what should be movable, flexible and able to follow (and shape) current debates in contexts not lim-











ited to the museum institution. Art historian **Hans Belting** has addressed this problematic as fundamental to museums: *Ideas are more flexible than museums, whose inventory is immobile and often determined by chance. In the museum, it is rather the idea of the museum itself that prevails over all other interests.*<sup>60</sup>

On another level, the responsible institutional agents have also referred to the actual question of perspective, expressing their purpose of including different agents with different narrating positions. In their 2009 introductory text about the non-European exhibition spaces in the Humboldt-Forum, **Hermann Parzinger** (president of the SPK), **Michael Eissenhauer** (director general of the State Museums of Berlin), **Viola König** (director of the Ethnological Museum) and **Raffael Gadebusch** (then-acting president of the Asian Art Museum) have stated that [a]nother basic principle of presentation in the Humboldt-Forum will be multiperspectivity, the constant change of the narrating position: questions directed at the objects and answers resulting from those questions will give rise to a dialogue between maker or artist on the one hand and researcher or viewer on the other. [...] In this approach and with the conscious inclusion of diverging, indeed controversial views, our presentation of non-European cultures at the Humboldt-Forum will differ from the traditional ethnological Museum. Motion and change of the narrating position are unique features of the Humboldt-Forum.<sup>61</sup>

Here it becomes obvious that the questions of dialogue and multiperspectivity go far beyond, even though they are related to, the issue of exhibition inventory. A constant change of the narrating position certainly increases the potential of an engaging, critical politics of display that is aware of the pitfalls of the exoticist gaze, which is so closely tied to the history of engagement with the respective collections. Yet, the question remains as to what consequences the notions of movement and multiperspectivity as invoked here entail for the possibility of an open and critical examination with the histories attached to the collections. Would this not mean to engage in a dialogue that is ultimately conflictual, and would such a

dialogue not require more serious thought about how to delegate definitional power? Who and what is supposed to be part of the representation politics in the yet-to-be-built exhibition space? Do the possible and actual repatriation claims, as they have come to haunt also German ethnological museums in the past years, not call for including the question of property more fundamentally, leading to an ultimately more diverse set of agents on all levels of museum work, with an equally diverse set of perspectives involved?<sup>62</sup>

The following quote in the aforementioned advertising brochure ironically reveals that the *change of perspectives* does not necessarily mean a delegation of definitional authority towards multiple agents and stakeholders: *The occidental view onto the world will be complemented by additional viewpoints and will thus provoke a change of perspective.*<sup>63</sup> Here, it becomes clear that the *additional viewpoints* are much more regarded as enrichment to an otherwise stable centre, which remains to occupy the position of the host. In that position, the centre continues to be the subject of the view rather than as addressee for the stated *change of perspective*.<sup>64</sup>

In a discussion lecture in 2010 about the Humboldt-Forum hosted by the Initiative Humboldt-Forum<sup>65</sup>, the Indian poet, art critic, cultural theorist and independent curator **Ranjit Hoskoté** took the evening's theme, *Voices of Cultures*, as an occasion to talk about the *possibility of transformative listening*.<sup>66</sup> While expressing his great hope for the Humboldt-Forum to *redeem the potentiality of intercultural dialogue*<sup>67</sup>, he explicitly critiqued the idea of hosting the *world cultures* without a radical questioning of definitional power: *there can no longer be a privileged position from which to listen to the voices of cultures: the host can no longer simply be a convenor, connoisseur and maker of the ground rules.*<sup>68</sup> Hoskoté goes on to historically situate this idea as being inspired by the will to encyclopaedic knowledge that underwrote and was sustained by the will to global power of Europe from the 17th century onwards. It is important to renounce the idea that one can possess and control the world simply because one has



the means of containing it within maps and measurements, an idea whose seed lies in the epic pioneering projects of exploration and taxonomy undertaken by **Alexander von Humboldt**.<sup>69</sup>

This quote hits at one very basic problem that I have mentioned above: The adherence to the object-centred idea of representing the world leaves exactly this history unproblematised. It rather reaffirms the separation between the *cultures of the world* and Europe, as the so to say absent yet defining subject of the gaze, and perpetuates the constitutive separation between viewing and viewed-upon subject. Hoskoté's warning can therefore also be read as a critique of the present discourse about the Humboldt-Forum: It is here where Berlin presents itself as host to the *world cultures*, yet without more closely reflecting upon the complex historical relationships with these cultures. The project of an encyclopaedic knowledge, which served as epistemic foundation for amassing the enormous collections that are going to move to the Palace Square, is not submitted to much historical interrogation. Contained by the Prussian palace, the exhibited objects remain to be the artifacts of the *Others* without much irritation to the passed on taxonomy of *West* and *Rest*. In this institutional assemblage of on the one hand the high cultures of European civilization (Museum Island) and on the other hand the arts and cultures of all the other continents (Humboldt-Forum), the much-critiqued dichotomy is left more or less intact.<sup>70</sup> Even if, in the words of the planners in their 2009 catalogue, the cultures represented on Museum Island and those in the Humboldt-Forum *form a unity of content in which each continent has its place and dialogue between the cultures is made manifest*<sup>71</sup>, the *West* remains to be in the privileged position of the host, of the listener to the *voices of cultures* who gets to decide how far a shift in perspective will go and what exactly it will entail. Until now it looks as if the *Western* perspective will keep on functioning, to quote **Stuart Hall**'s classical text, as *unified and homogeneous viewpoint*.<sup>72</sup> It will once again be re-constituted as structuring concept in the representational taxonomy of territorially defined, well-separated cultures.

Concerning notions of *dialogue* and *multi-perspectivity*, then, it would be worthwhile to more strongly consider their discussion in the field of museum studies. The most fruitful debates in this respect have probably centred around the *contact zone*: 15 years ago, **James Clifford** transferred **Mary-Louise Pratt**'s term, which she had introduced in her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992), into the field of museums. Pratt defined the contact zone as *the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict*.<sup>73</sup> For Clifford, Pratt's notion of *contact* as a perspective that *emphasizes how subjects are constituted in and by their relations to each other* described very well the unequal power relations, as they are constitutive to Western museums holding *non-Western* collections. Museums can be seen as spaces that are, equally as Pratt's contact zone, conditioned by *copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power*.<sup>74</sup> In his critical review of (also ethnographic) exhibition contexts, Clifford argued for acknowledging the fundamentally conflictive character of the work of museum representation and pleaded for a *decentralization and circulation of collections in a multiplex public sphere, an expansion of the range of things that can happen in museums and museum-like settings*.<sup>75</sup> Since this important intervention in the fields of museums and museum studies, the term *contact zone* has been subject to numerous texts and conferences, and museum practitioners have also increasingly attempted to make it fruitful for their exhibition work. However, on this path it has often lost much of its character of advocating a fundamentally conflictual and often confrontational encounter between various social agents and respective epistemologies. In a critical review of the various appropriations of the *contact zone* in museum practice since Clifford's important intervention, anthropologist **Robin Boast** sketches the problematics of the trend towards the dialogical, critiquing the increased implementation of the *contact zone* as *neocolonial genre*<sup>76</sup>: *Dialogue and collaboration is*











*the name of the game these days and there are few museums with anthropological, or even archaeological, collections that would consider an exhibition that did not include some form of consultation.*<sup>77</sup> Despite Clifford's emphasis that the notion of contact in the museum must go far beyond consultation and sensitivity, museums, in Boast's words, can still be regarded as *asymmetric spaces of appropriation* in which, *[n]o matter how much we try to make the spaces accommodating, they remain sites where the Others come to perform for us, not with us.*<sup>78</sup>

The discourse about the Humboldt-Forum so far reveals exactly this problematic: we can see an engagement with the notions of dialogue and multiperspectivity while at the same time we do not find much of a critical and foundational view upon the histories of epistemic disclosure of the *Other*, of (colonial) exchange and entanglement – histories, which lie at the heart of the modern project of ethnological collecting and exhibiting. As a result, the notion of multiperspectivity becomes devoid of much of its possibly critical potential. The chances of addressing those histories, however, are manifold, yet with their very own methodological implications and difficulties. They certainly bring with them the necessity to further the debate about what role institutions hosting ethnographic collections could and should play in the present context; a context, in which colonial history is just slowly becoming an issue of public debate and a matter of reflection regarding a postcolonial politics of remembrance within and outside the museum. A history, which has to also be understood in much broader terms than the years of factual colonial rule: a history of epistemic violence against the various *Others* whose images, material artifacts and last, but not least, racialized bodies entered a collective imaginary that became the very basis for the constitution of the *Self*. It would be crucial to attend here to the many historical accounts, according to which it was the comparatively long restraint from entering into the realm of European colonial powers, which lead to a compensation through colonial fantasies, through a sort of *colonialism without colonies*. These fantasies have been regarded as constitutive for the development of a German national identity long before the foun-

dation of the German Empire in 1871 and they pervaded all sectors of society, as **Susanne Zantop** among others has prominently argued.<sup>79</sup>

At least as important as the question of *who*, which always carries the danger of falling prey to an essentialized notion of *voice* and perspective, should be the question of *how*: how are histories imagined and what political interests and motivations are, or should be, at the basis of collectively thinking about a new politics of history in museums? The backdrop for such reflection should certainly be the location of such a historically saturated space as the Palace Square in Germany's capital. And it is last, but not least, the perspectives of the present, from which such histories are negotiated and fought over.

For the debates about the future of European metropolitan museums holding ethnographic collections, the Humboldt-Forum's planning process plays a significant role and will increasingly do so in the course of the near future. And this is not despite of, but because of its combining of the historical particularities of Berlin's Palace Square debates, the broader institutional logics at play and more general trends in the institutional handling of the vast ethnographic collections of Western museums. The Humboldt-Forum's planning process therefore serves as an interesting and important site for the analysis of both the local specificities of Berlin as well as the more general trends in the cultural politics at Western museums at play; a politics that is saturated with collective memories and cultural imaginaries however divergent they may be. Before the planning is finished and its results assessed in the broader context of recent openings, there will hopefully be more critical engagement with the very specific, and often problematically selective, ways of framing Berlin's relationship with the world, past and present.

\* All notes to be find in <http://www.darkmatter101.org>







# FREISETZ

Fabian Knecht





# LUNG





**On November 1, 2014 a white pillar of smoke spiraled into the sky from the roof of Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie for approximately one hour**

**Vom Dach der Neuen Nationalgalerie in Berlin schraubte sich am 1. November 2014 für ca. 1 Stunde eine weiße Rauchsäule in den Himmel**

The towering cloud formation spread as a diffuse mist throughout the immediate vicinity of the building, reaching as far as neighboring Tiergarten. From a distance it seemed almost palpable. Up close, however, it was transparent, flowing and ephemeral, generating an enthralling contrast to the statuary and formal clarity of Mies van der Rohe's architecture. Fabian Knecht's **FREISETZUNG** ("RELEASE") is a critical response to this icon of classic modernism. His artistic assault acts as a temporary alteration in the appearance of this heroic temple of art, unusual from a functional perspective, whose ground floor is structured in such way that it offers views of the urban scenery from all sides while only the lower level only has compartmentalized rooms.

*"Maybe it is a kind of monumental anti-monument monument to what remains of the shrinking cultural area in art – to a space that seems dissolve into vapor, given the swing toward the 'right' that only values what is useful and denies the intoxicating excess of imagery, which is the true place of art, its right to exist."*<sup>1</sup>

This comment by Robert Morris about his own steam column, *Steam*, conceived in 1967, marks the beginning of a new, anti-statuary, dynamically moving, poly-sensual form of plastic work and functions as a reference for Knecht's work as sketched here. His portrait of the fleeting uses the sky as an image carrier and turns the Berlin Museum into a cloud factory, a site for ideas, illusion machine, power station – the embodiment of intellectual freedom beyond sociopolitical constraints: Energy that is released from the temple of art, the white cube, and out into our world, as the aesthetic boundary between the reality of the observer and the sphere of art fades away. While the mist obscured the view onto the exterior for the visitors inside the building, *the intervention* could be seen outside from afar and manipulated the familiar urban en-

Das sich auftürmende Wolkengebilde verteilte sich als diffuser Nebel in unmittelbarer Nähe des Gebäudes und zog bis über den benachbarten Tiergarten. Aus der Distanz erschien es fast greifbar, in direkter Reichweite dagegen transparent, fließend und ephemere, wodurch es in einen spannungsvollen Kontrast mit der Statuarik und formalen Klarheit der Architektur Mies van der Rohes trat. Mit seiner Intervention **FREISETZUNG** nähert sich Fabian Knecht dieser Ikone der klassischen Moderne in einer kritischen Auseinandersetzung. Sein künstlerischer Angriff agiert im Sinne einer temporären Veränderung der Erscheinungsweise dieses heroischen, funktional betrachtet ungewöhnlichen Kunsttempels, der angesichts seiner baulichen Struktur im Erdgeschoss allseits Durchblicke auf die Stadtkulisse zulässt, während nur die untere Ebene klassische Raumkompartimente aufweist.

*»Vielleicht ist es eine Art monumentales Anti-Monument-Monument für die schrumpfende kulturelle Restfläche in der Kunst – für einen Raum, der sich in Dampf auflösen scheint, angesichts des Rucks zum „Rechten“, das nur das Nützliche wertschätzt und dem berausenden Exzess der Metaphorik, der doch der wahre Ort der Kunst ist, sein Daseinsrecht versagt.«*<sup>1</sup>

Dieser Kommentar von Robert Morris über seine eigene, 1967 konzipierte Wasserdampfsäule *Steam* markiert den Beginn einer neuen, (un)statuarischen, dynamisch-beweglichen, poly-sensuellen Form des Plastischen und fungiert für die hier skizzierte Arbeit Knechts als Referenz. Sein Portrait des Flüchtigen nutzt den Himmel als Bildträger, lässt das Berliner Museum als Wolkenfabrik erscheinen, als Gedankenstätte, Illusionsmaschine, Kraftwerk – Verkörperung geistiger Freiheit jenseits gesellschaftspolitischer Zwänge: Energie, die aus dem Tempel der Kunst, dem White Cube befreit und in unsere Welt entlassen wird, so dass die ästhetische Grenze



vironment; it also embodies the iridescent ambivalence of beauty and awe, of the undisputed power of images that take on a different semantic charge depending on the context—from the contemporary art exhibit on the occasion of the Berlin Festival of Future Nows to the recently omnipresent photos of rising pillars of smoke, for example above the cityscape Kobanê's from news coverage of the conflict in Syria.

The staged transformation of materials and the transition into changing states of matter connect on an art historical level to Joseph Beuys' Plastisch-Thermisches Urmeter (Thermal/Plastic Primeval Meter) (1984), to a small, white, cloud of steam rising close above the ground—in his words: "Mach mal'n bißchen Dampf, [...] geh mal ein bißchen schärfer an die Fragen heran [...]".

As such, both works stand for transformation and dedifferentiation, for the loss of order—and, at the same time, are iconic testimonials of a fluid modernism.

zwischen Betrachterrealität und Kunstsphäre schwindet. Während der Nebel für die sich im Inneren des Gebäudes aufhaltenden Besucher teils die Sicht auf den Außenraum verunklärte, war seine Intervention draußen von Weitem sichtbar und manipuliert das vertraute urbane Umfeld, zudem verkörpert es die schillernde Ambivalenz von Schönheit und Schrecken, von der unbestrittenen Macht der Bilder, die kontextbedingt einer unterschiedlichen semantischen Aufladung unterliegen—zwischen zeitgenössischer Kunstschau anlässlich des Berliner **Festivals of Future Nows** und wie zum Beispiel der kürzlich omnipräsenten Fotos von aufsteigenden Rauchsäulen über den Stadtlandschaften Kobanê durch die Berichterstattung aus dem Krisengebiet Syrien.

Die inszenierte Umwandlung von Materialien bzw. Überführung in wechselnde Aggregatzustände knüpft auf kunsthistorischer Ebene an Josef Beuys' Plastisch-Thermisches Urmeter (1984), eine kleine weiße, dicht über dem Boden aufsteigende Dampfwolke an—in dessen Worten: »Mach mal'n bißchen Dampf, [...] geh mal ein bißchen schärfer an die Fragen heran [...]«.

So stehen beide Werke für Transformation und Entdifferenzierung, für den Verlust von Ordnung—und sind zugleich ikonische Zeugnisse einer liquiden Moderne.



















A woman with long, flowing blonde hair is shown from the chest up. Her eyes are closed, and she has a serene expression. The background is a soft, out-of-focus mix of light blue, green, and yellow, suggesting a natural, outdoor setting. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

# **BURNING EYES**

Nathalie Vanheule

































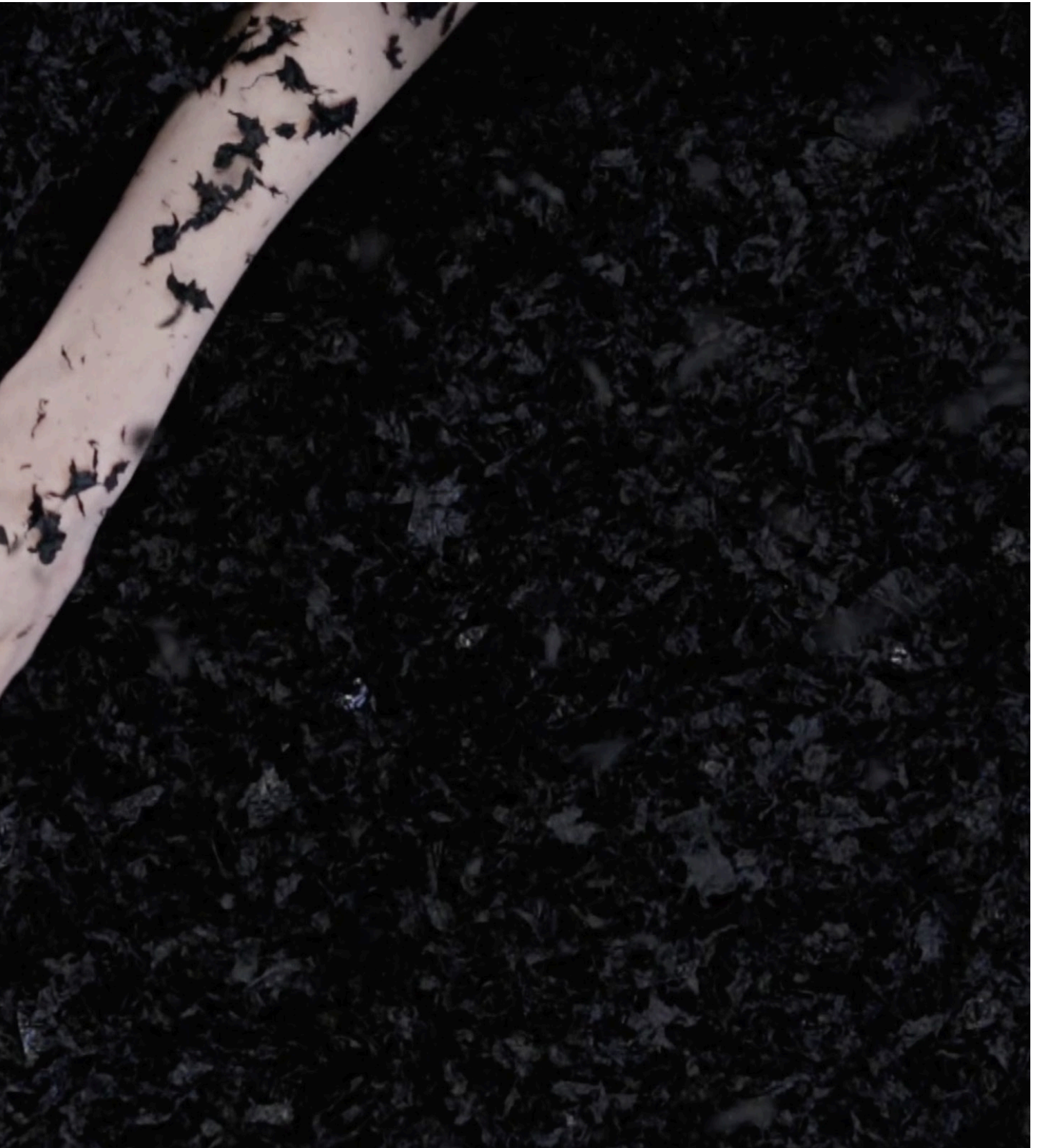








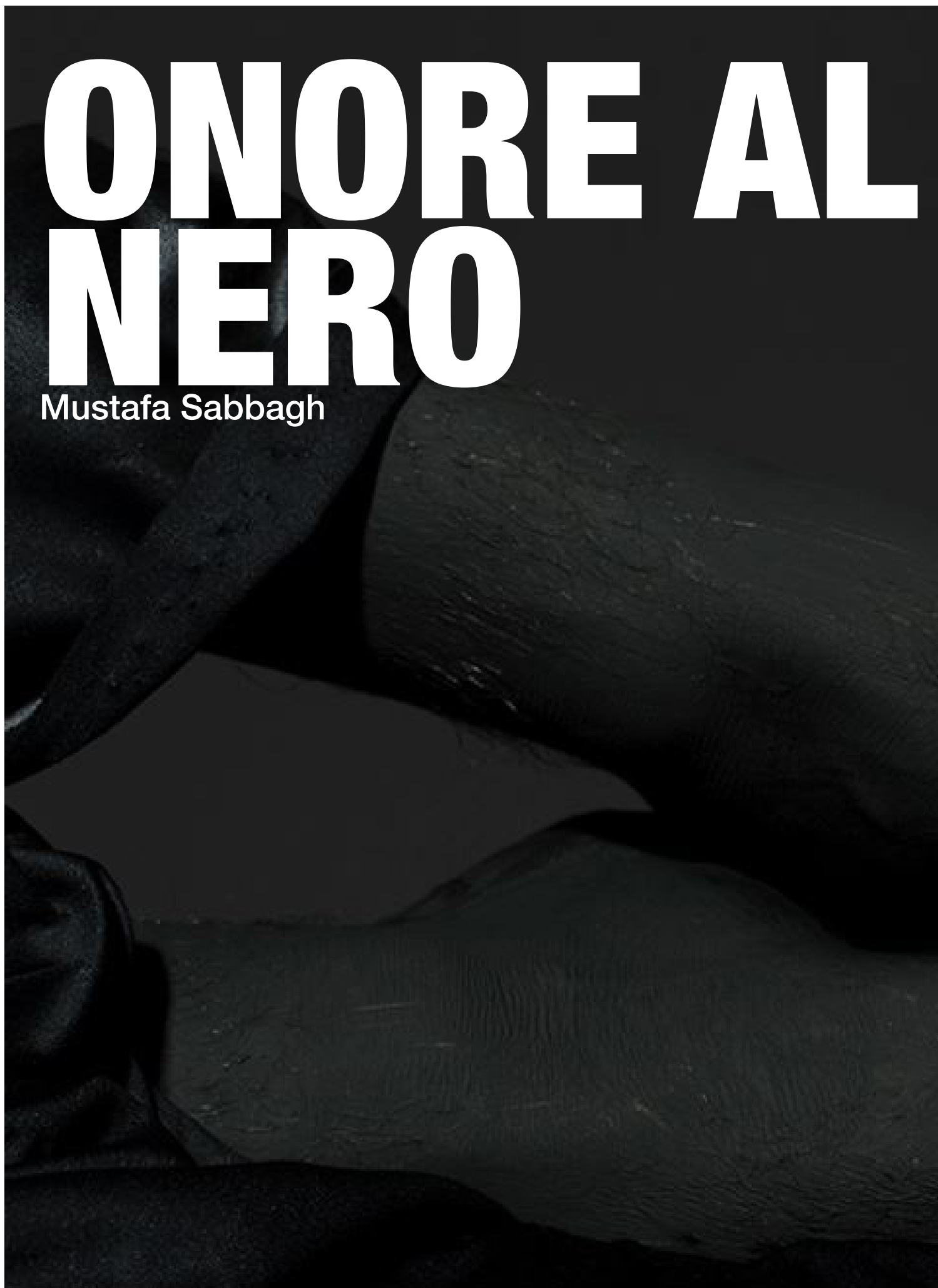






# ONORE AL NERO

Mustafa Sabbagh































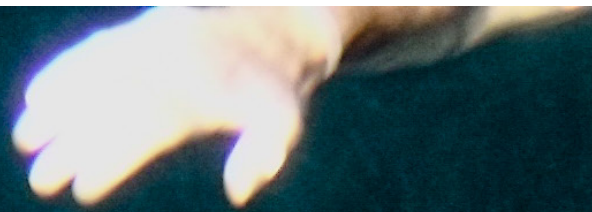
















Luca Jacob

# KAOS

















# IMMENSE

Carmen Marchena Alonso





**ITY**





























# SKIN OF THEIR LIGHT

Diane Drubay

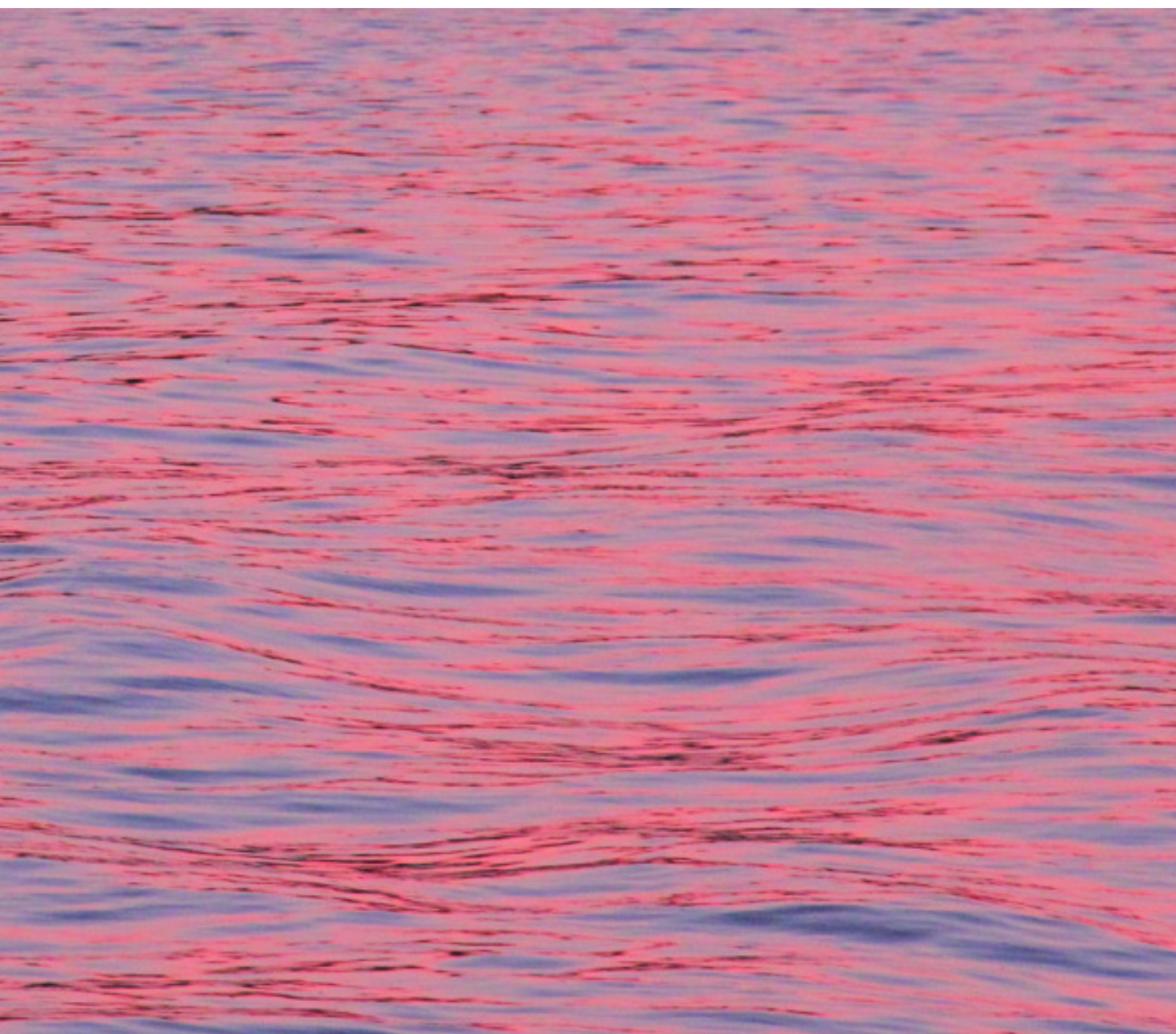








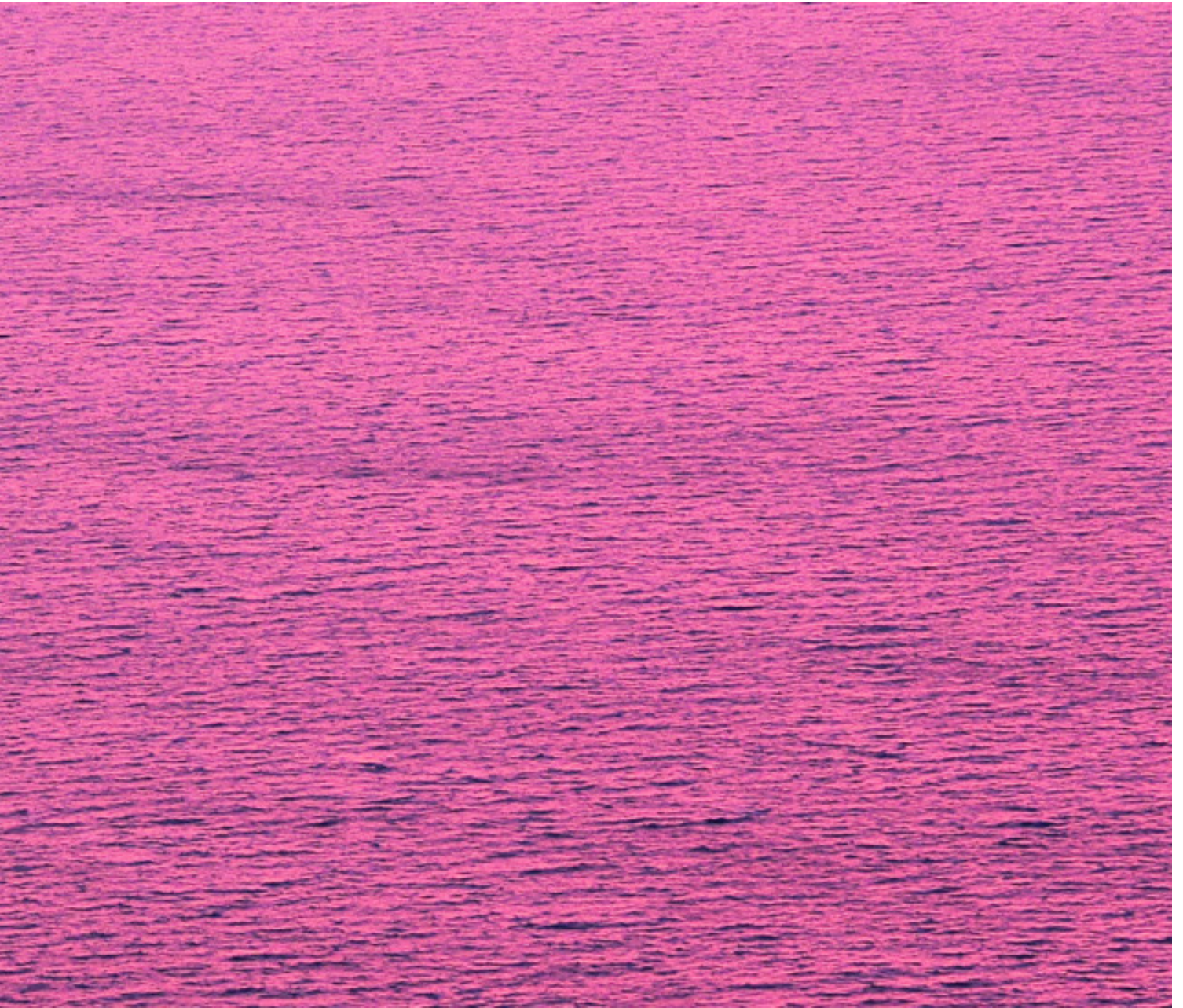




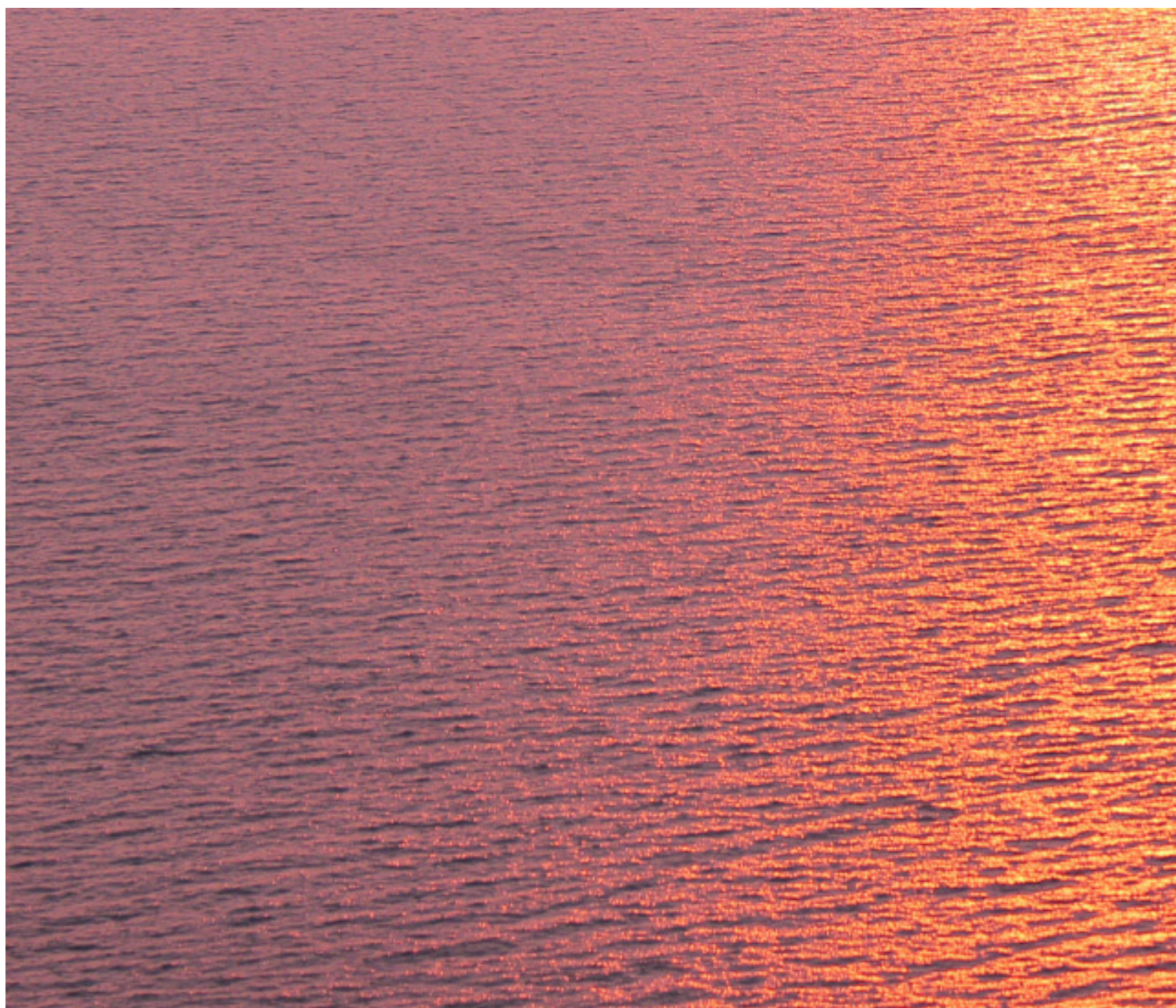




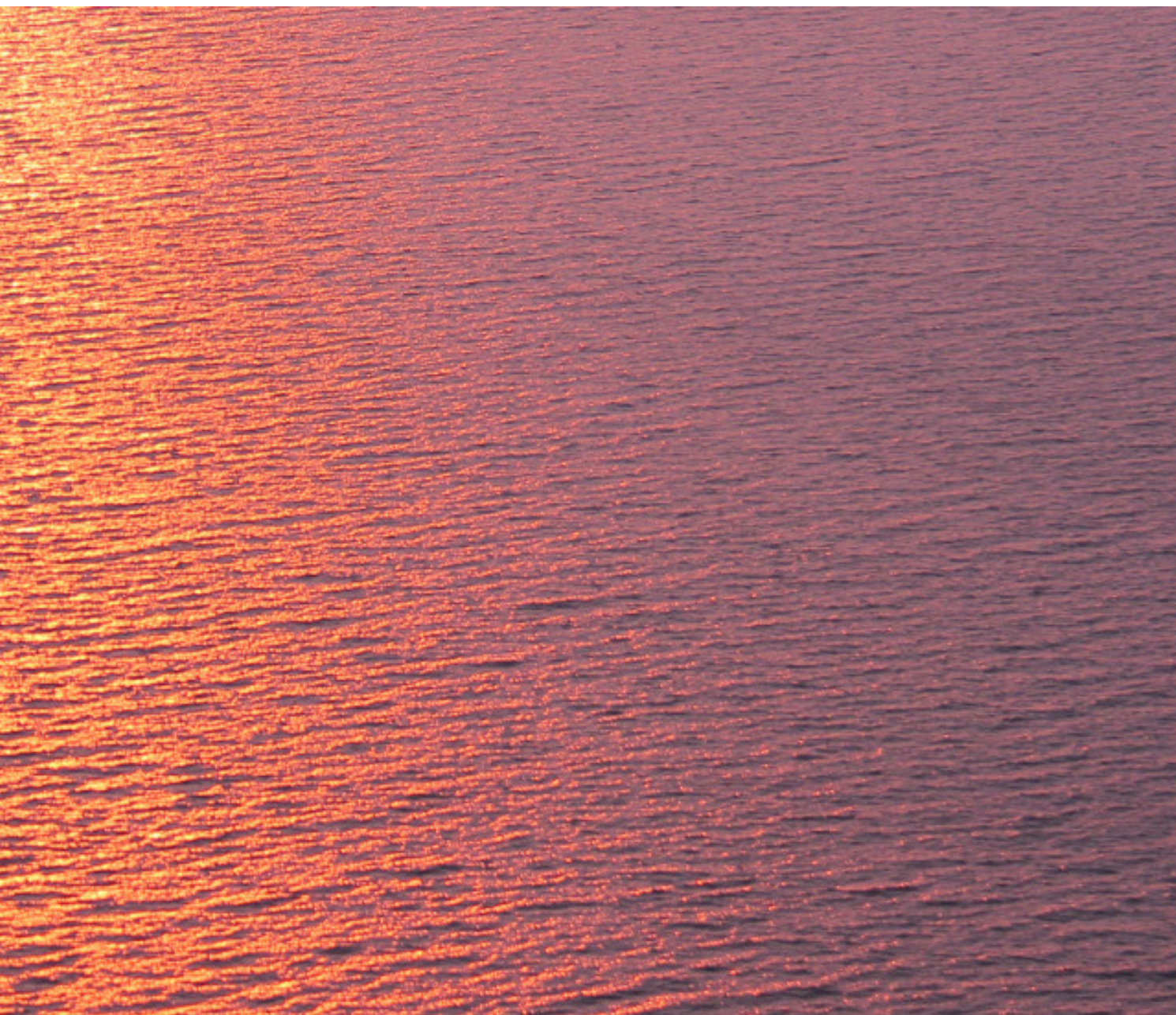




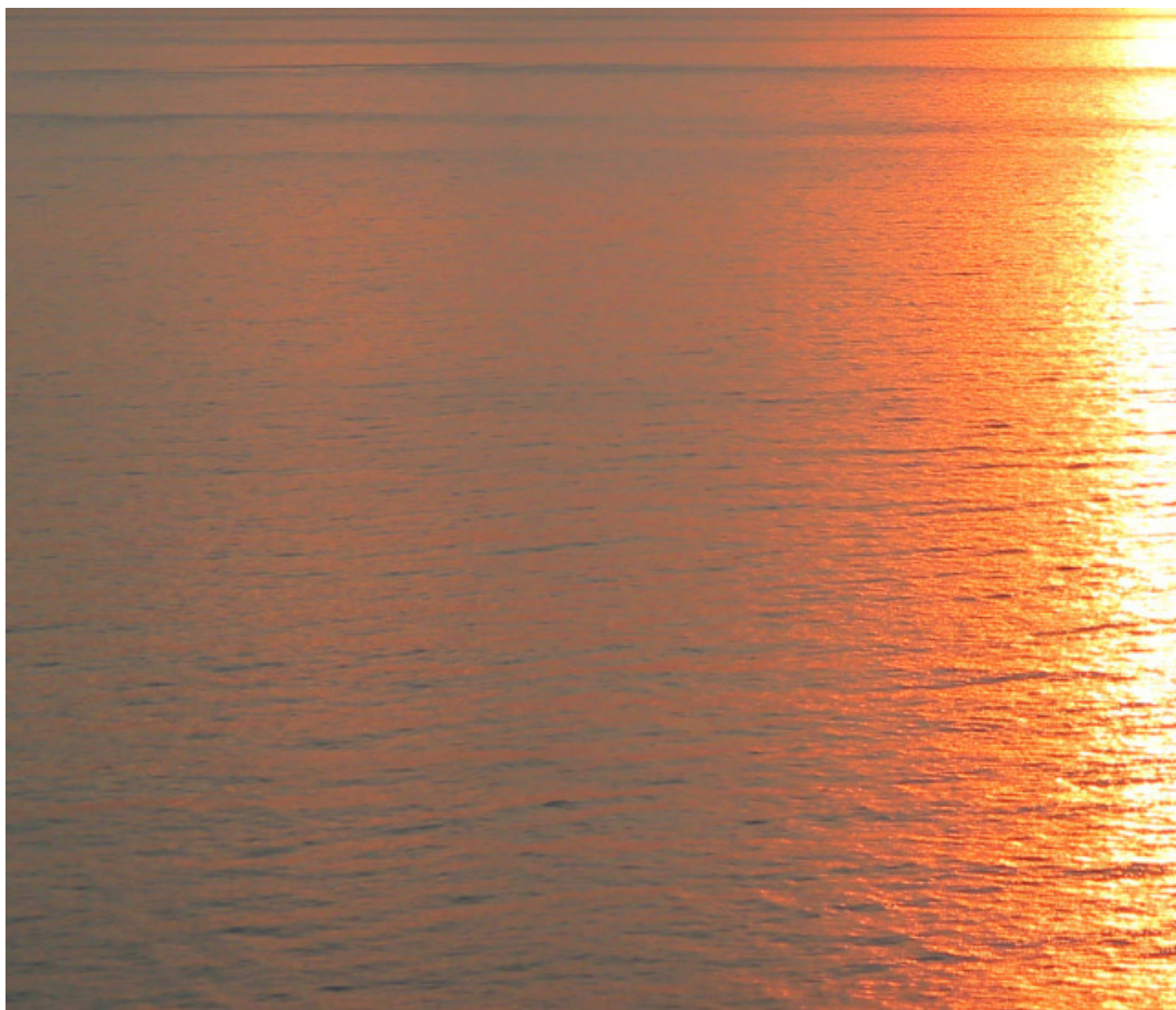




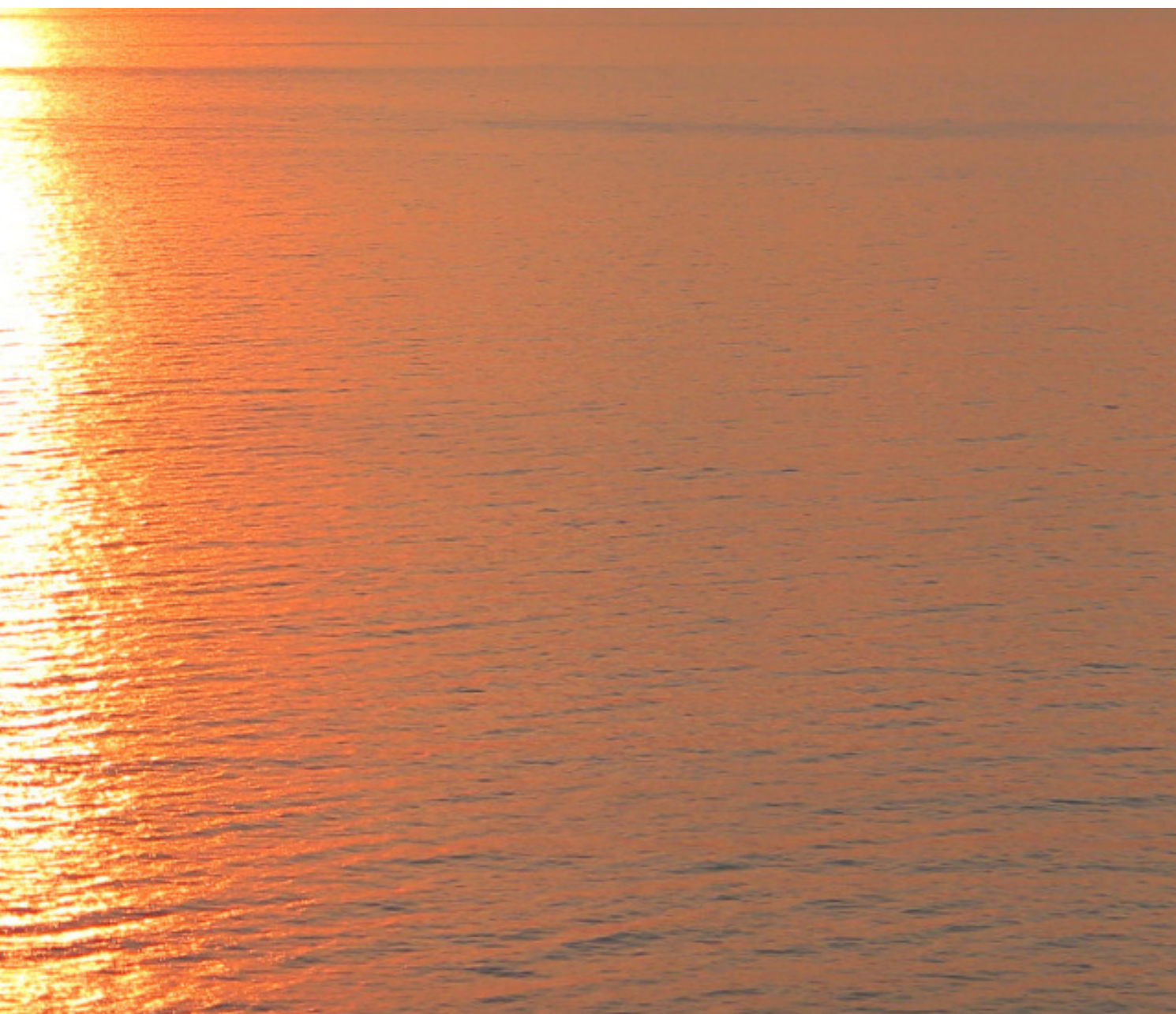






















**GRO**



**UND**



# APPENDIX

## **Blecharz, Wojtek**

Interview: Ismael Ogando

Portrait: Joerg Letz

Documentation: “*Transcriptum*” for Festival Konfrontacje Teatralne, Lublin

© Maciej Rukasz

## **von Bose, Friedrich**

*I am curator of the Humboldt Laboratory, Humboldt University’s interdisciplinary exhibition space in the Humboldt Forum. Based at HU’s Hermann von Helmholtz Center for Cultural Techniques, my colleagues and I work together with a broad range of scholars as well as students in preparation for the opening exhibition. Additionally, I am responsible for the long-term strategic planning of HU’s exhibitions and programs in the Forum.*

Photos: Frank Brexel

© 2008

## **Busse, Emre**

Interview: Ismael Ogando

Portraits: Francesco Cascavilla

© 2016

## **Cascavila, Francesco**

Born in Italy in 1991, studied drawing and painting at the Blue Door Art School in Rome. Upon graduation he moved to Berlin.

## **del Castillo, Maximo**

Maximo is a graphic designer, art director, photographer and blogger from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

## **Discordant**

Emanuele Sturlese reads, listens, travels and reassembles. He doesn’t pass by, he torments contexts with a caress. He grows up and becomes Discordant, claustrophobically floating behind his pictures, portraying works of industrial death.

## **Drastrup, Søren**

Born in Denmark in 1989; since 2012 he lives in Berlin, studying photography at BTK – Berliner Technische Kunsthochschule.

## **Drubay, Diane**

Diane founded the Museum Think Tank Berlin, co-founded Museomix and is currently the conference curator of Museum Connections. Previously, she worked at the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and at the Henner Museum in Paris.

## **Durán, Melvin**

Interview: Ana Victoria Torres

Portraits: Melvin Durán

## **Egelhoff, Andy**

Andy is a DJ and photographer based in Brooklyn who performs as SPRKLBB. He was the founding resident for the Ostbahnhof parties in New York and Los Angeles.

## **Glendon, Jonathan**

Photo-essay on Cataract Project in Taveuni Hospital, Taveuni, Fiji.

© 2015



## **Guérin, Guillaume**

Artist, photographer, and videomaker based in Berlin.

## **Jacob, Luca**

*This series aims to create a sort of biocentric encyclopedia in which the human being, laid bare, is contextualized in the company of other Earthlings (inhabitants of Earth) and creates a natural balance in which everyone has the need and the desire to live free according to their natural instincts.*

## **Knecht, Fabian**

Fabian Knecht, born 1980 in Magdeburg, studied at the Universität der Künste Berlin and at the California Institute of the Arts. In 2014 he completed his master's degree with Olafur Eliasson, at whose Institut für Raumexperimente he studied from 2009 to 2014. In 2012 he assisted in the studio of Matthew Barney in New York.

Text: Ursula Ströbele

Documentation: "FREISETZUNG" November 1, 2014. Festival of Future Nows

Neue Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

Courtesy Alexander Levy & Fabian Knecht

© 2014

## **Kuperus, Nicola**

Nicola Kuperus is an American musician and artist. She is a member of the band ADULT. with her husband Adam Lee Miller (formerly of Le Car). ADULT. owns and manages Ersatz Audio, a record label based out of Detroit, Michigan.

## **Kwon, Hye Kyoung**

Born 1984, Ulsan, South Korea.

Interview: Yeri Hong

Portraits: Hee Jung Choi

© 2016

## **le Roux, Sophie**

Series selected out of "Sludge World" a project that visits neglected corners of Europe to find the unfamiliar in the mundane and the charisma in its decay. Her method is to choose an arbitrary area on the map and walk around with a point and shoot camera until all film has been spent.

## **Marchena Alonso, Carmen**

Interview: Ismael Ogando

All images courtesy of the artist.

## **Mekoudja, Steve**

*Writing is my first passion. My mother says that I have been writing since I was 3 and that I started telling stories towards the end of the primary school. But it is only when I won the Stéphane Hessel award for my short story Tala Ngai on the rape of women in the Congo that I decided to become a writer. Since then, writing has a central position in my life. I have written for many magazines and literary reviews including Mr Afropolitan, Inspire Afrika, Afrolivresque, Stadssprachen, FU Review and so forth.*

A short-story written in French, first published on his blog.

Photo: Vince Bucci

© 2015

## **Pavlensky, Pyotr**

Pavlensky's acts of self-mutilation and vandalism have landed him in jail and blurred the lines among art, protest and crime.

Documentation: Shalygina, Oksana

## **Phillips, Eric & Chris**

Portraits selected from a series taken during the Pornceptual party at Prince Charles, Berlin on October 10, 2015.

## **Sabbagh, Mustafa**

Italian artist and photographer born in Amman, Jordan in 1961.

## **Vanheule, Nathalie**

*I realised this movie one year after 3 beloved family members died in 2 weeks time, just one week before I gave birth. This opened old pain and feelings of loss I had experienced in my youth and which are always felt in what I create. We can never be prepared for death and loss. It is like a shadow. It is always there, but we don't notice it. We all have an attempt to escape ephemerality, in the echoes of our actions and creations and once in a while being blinded by light. Only through darkness, we can see the light.*

Images courtesy of the artist

© 2015

**WINTER 2016**  
Cover © Søren Drastrup





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